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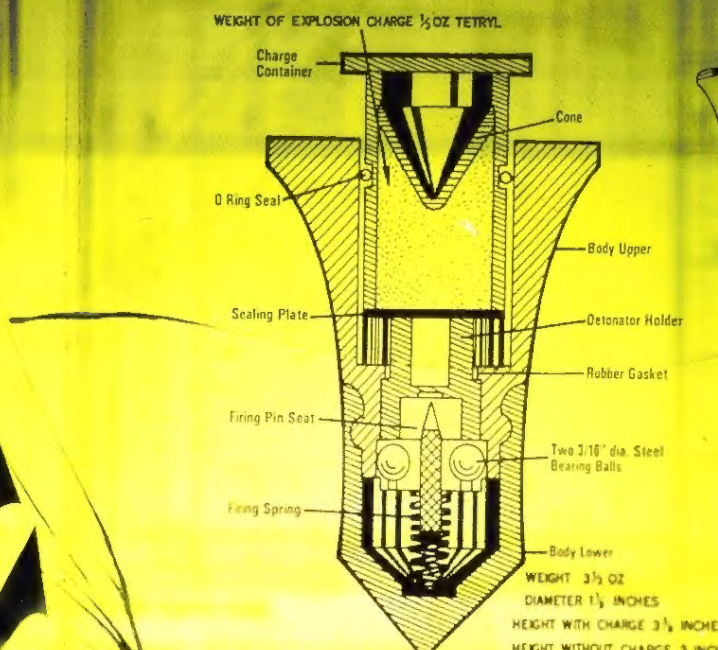

Blood vessels and wires should never have been crossed.
Souls and circuitry, brain stems and processors.

19:11

THE LINE BETWEEN MAN AND MACHINE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ERASED.

U.S. MARINE CORPS TARGET

U.S. MARINE CORPS 25-METER ZEROING PROCEDURES

(BY FOLLOWING THE STEPS BELOW AND ESTABLISHING A ZERO AT 25 METERS, YOUR M16A2 RIFLE SIGHTS WILL BE SET WITH A 300-METER BATTLESIGHT.)

1. DO NOT MOVE FRONT SIGHT POST AT THIS TIME. IT WAS SET AT THE FACTORY OR BY A PREVIOUS SHOOTER AND SHOULD BE VERY CLOSE TO YOUR ZERO.
2. CENTER THE REAR SIGHT APERTURE BY TURNING THE WINDAGE KNOB LEFT OR RIGHT. (THIS IS CALLED MECHANICAL ZERO WINDAGE.)
3. THE UNMARKED APERTURE SHOULD BE UP.
4. ROTATE ELEVATION KNOB IN THE DOWN DIRECTION (COUNTERCLOCKWISE). THE ELEVATION KNOB SHOULD STOP THREE CLICKS PAST THE 300-METER MARK. THE REAR SIGHT SHOULD BE ALL THE WAY DOWN ON THE LAST WHOLE "CLICK" BEFORE IT BOTTOMS OUT. THIS IS CALLED MECHANICAL ZERO ELEVATION FOR THE REAR SIGHT. IF YOUR RANGE SCALE WILL NOT LINE UP IN THE ABOVE MANNER, AN ARMORER WILL BE REQUIRED TO ADJUST THE RANGE SCALE FOR YOU.

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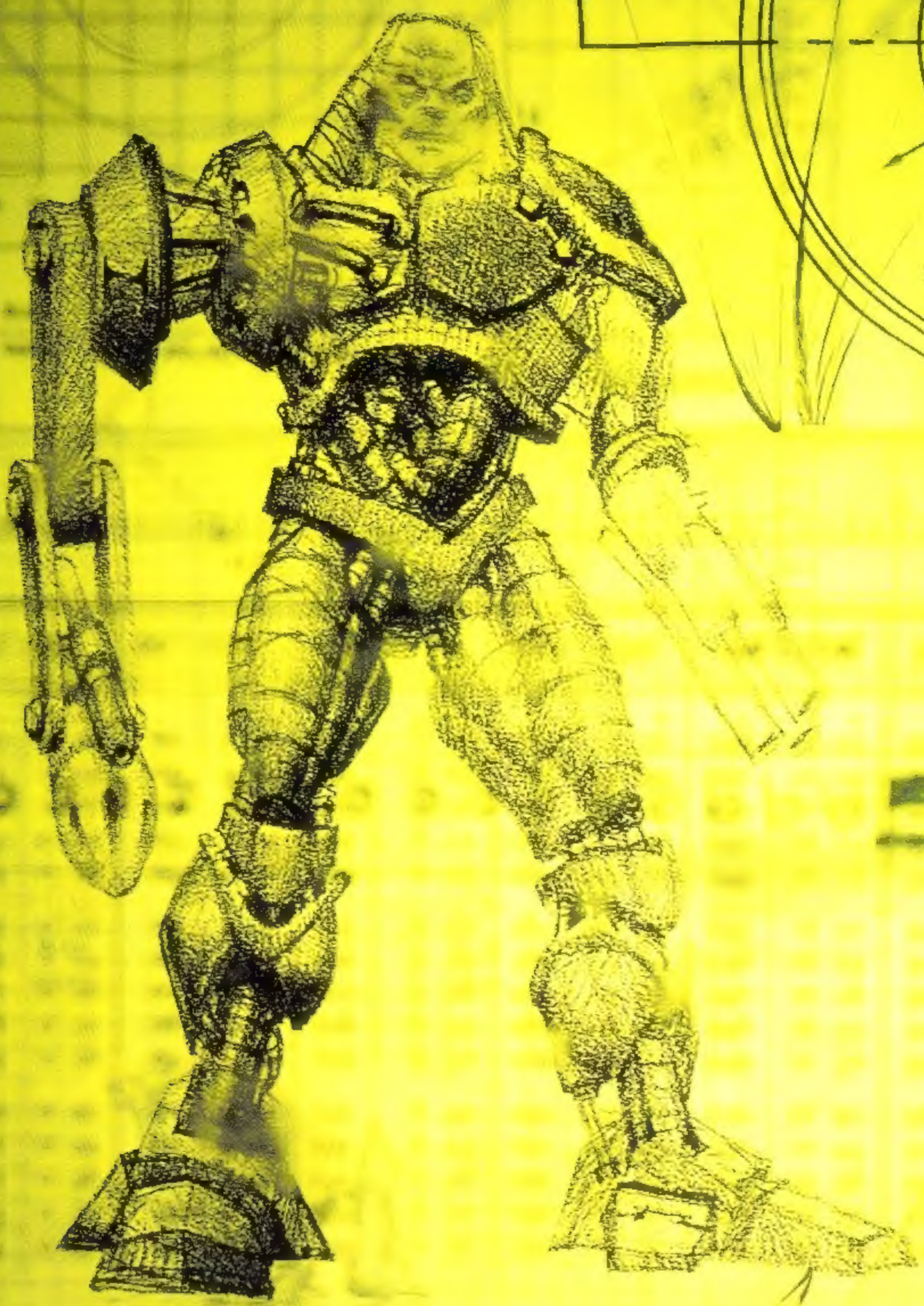

5·19·47 14:35 ALIEN SCUM CAN KISS THE BUTT OF MY RAIL GUN. Orders came in from the brass this morning. Tonight, I'll be on the C-30K Marine Carrier with the rest of 101st Spaceborne. A little hypersleep, a couple thousand gallons of rationed I.V. Nourishment, a few hundred light years, and we'll be knee-deep in Strogg blood.

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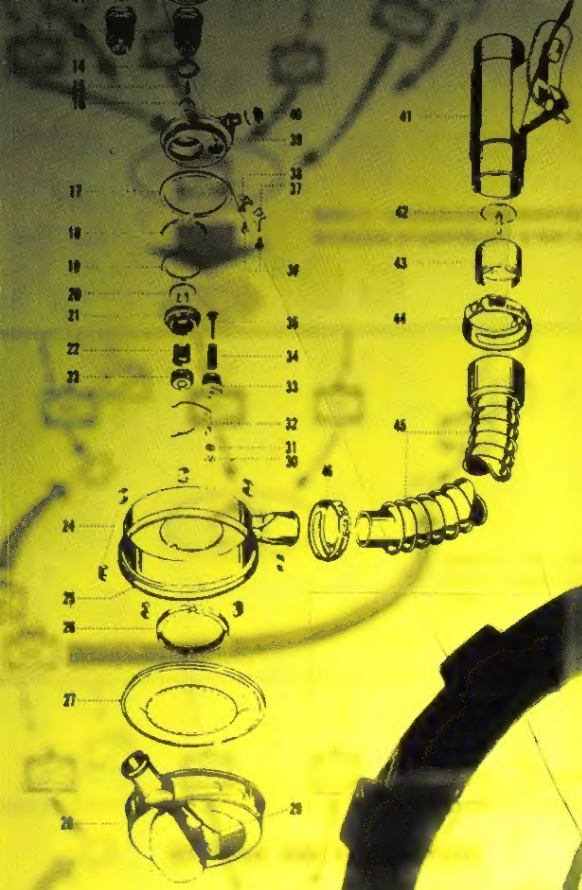

"Quake II will establish id as the pre-eminent blast-masters more than ever before."

—PC Gamer

20:16 I'm now on the carrier and next in line for my goodnight kiss. When I awake from the icy hyposleep, there will be only hell. And there will be hell to pay. My railgun and BFG will make sure of that. The Stroggs killed my parents and my only sister.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I AM NOT A PACIFIST.

QUAKE II™

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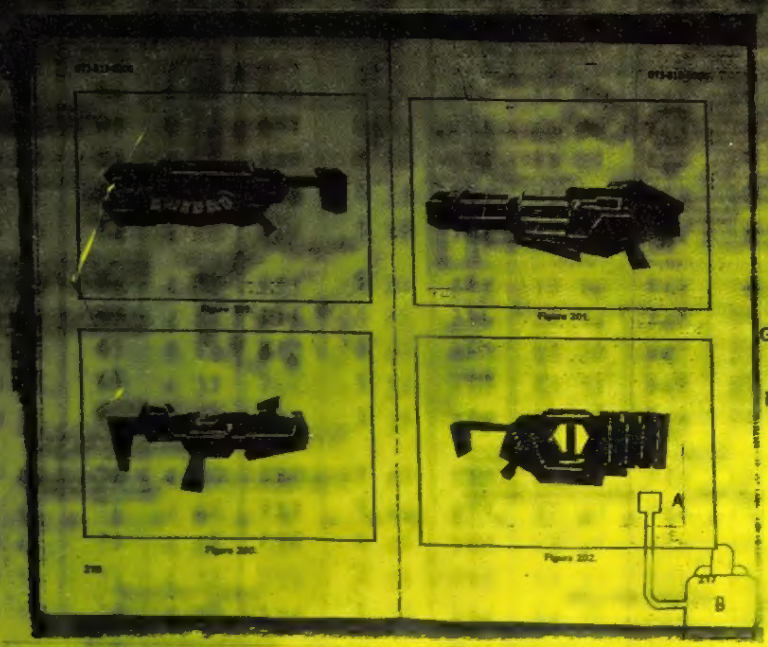
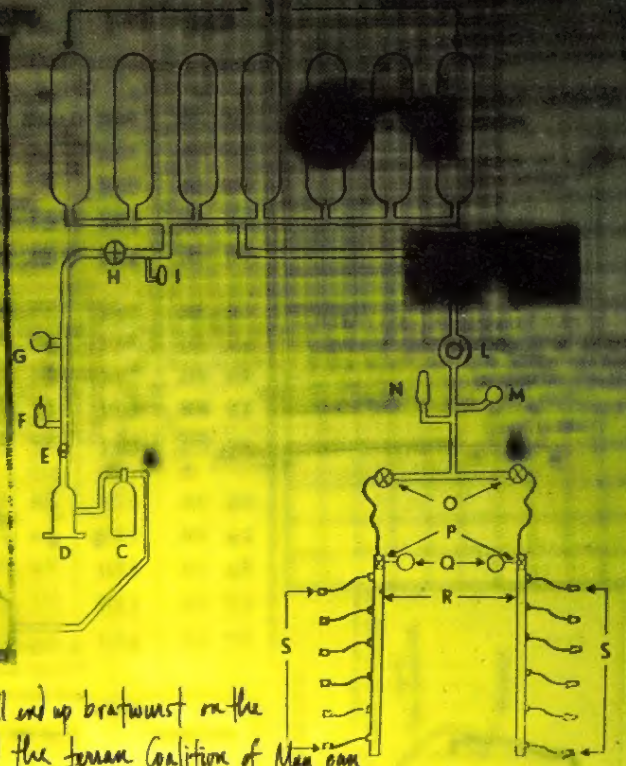


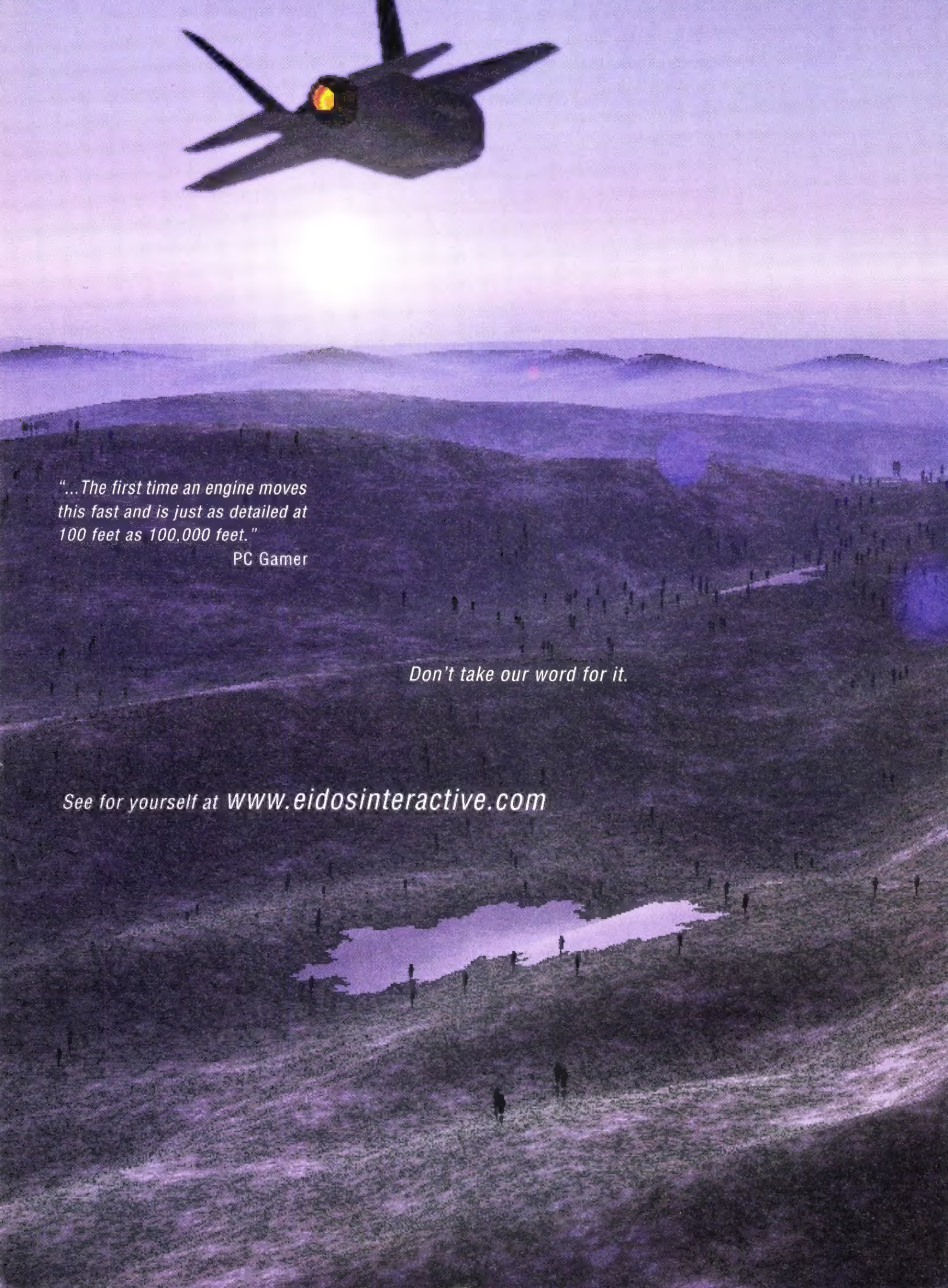


17:05 It's either us or them this time. We lose, and we all end up bratwurst on the grill of some ungodly mechanized carnivore. We win, and the terran Coalition of Man can start rebuilding the cities on Mars, Olympus, even Earth. Who knows - they might even get the old interplanetary football league going again.
God, I miss Monday Night Football.

18:03 Grotesque images of Stroggs have been filling my sleep at night. Their metallic spines jutting awkwardly through muscle, skin and connective tissue, masks of human facial skin smeared and bonded to their cyber-alloy heads, crude but powerful weapons jammed into oozing, gaping sockets. Thank God the endless sleep ahead is dreamless.

19:42 You learn the hard way in the outer sectors... Like never get into a drinking match with a three-headed Bukan. Never assume a Strogg is dead even when he's nothing but bloody scraps of shrapnel. And never go to bed with a Rabaul no matter how many breasts she has.

QUAKE II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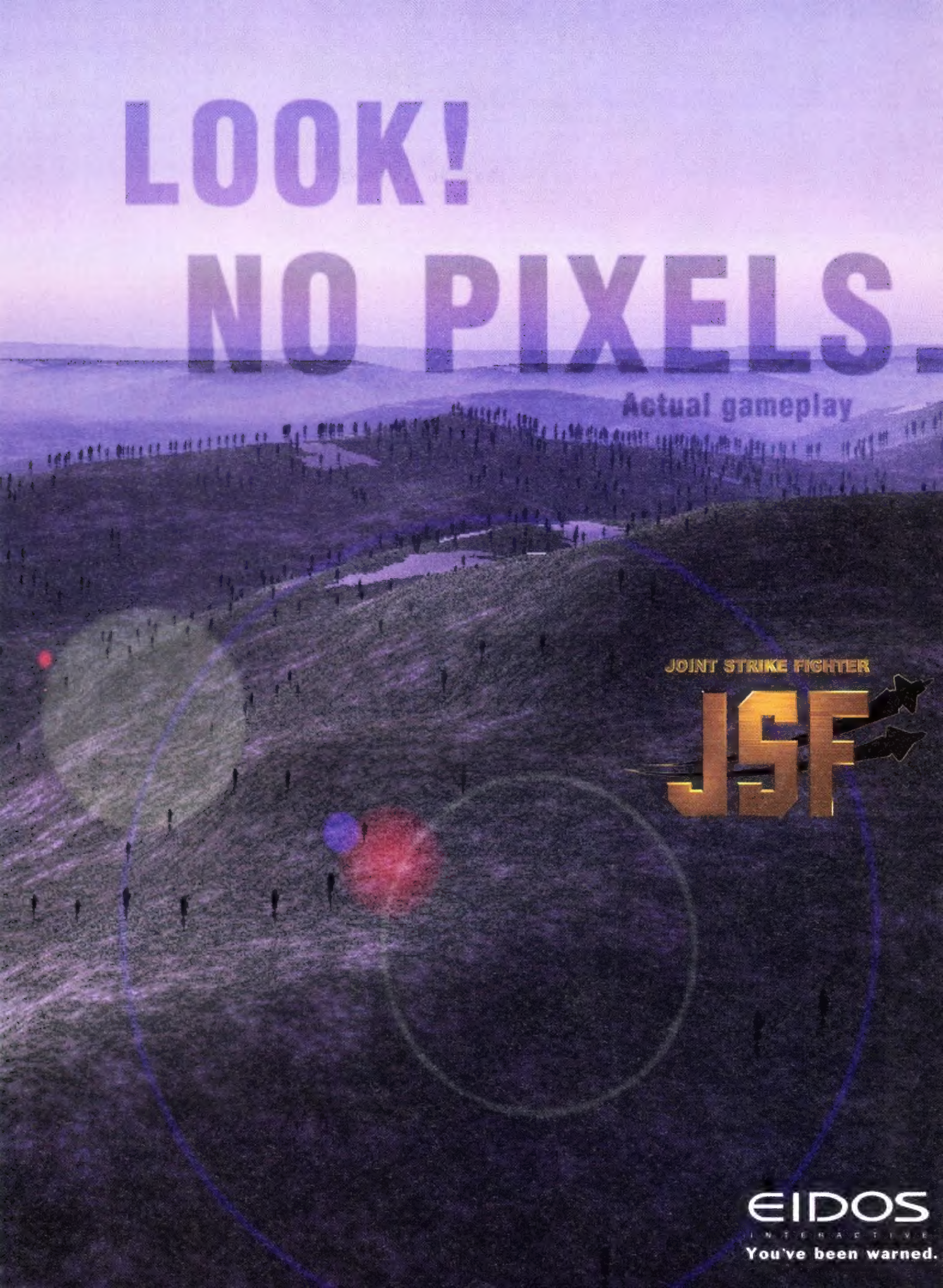
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FALCON 4.0

POPULOUS: THE THIRD COMING

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review ratings

Classic ★★★★★
Excellent ★★★★☆
Good ★★★☆☆
Fair ★★☆☆☆
Why? ★☆☆☆☆

All ratings are assigned by the author of the article.
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If you don't do SOMETHING...

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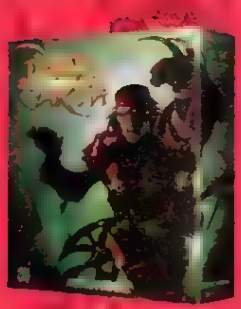

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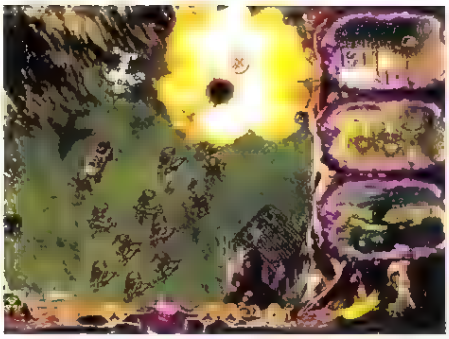

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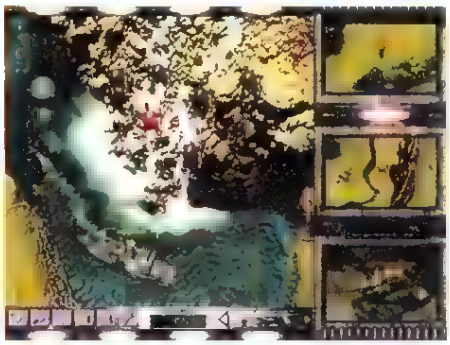

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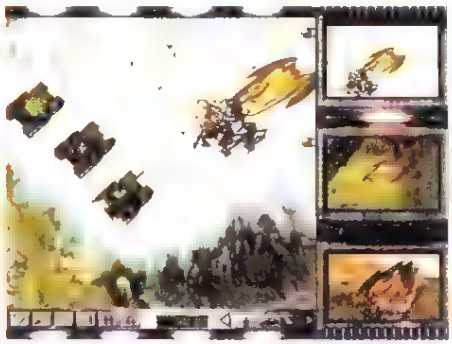

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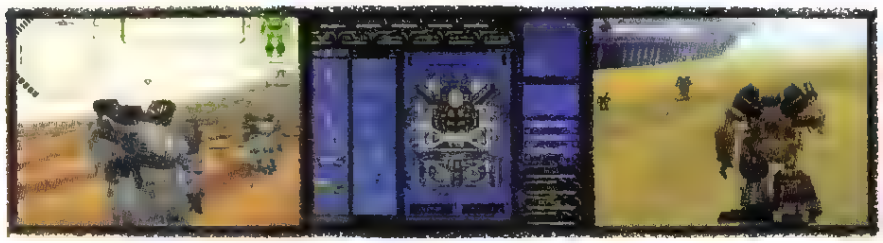

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THE NEW BREED

HEAVY GEAR

I'm a communist

Having been online since the early 1980's, first with CompuServe, now with the Internet, I've experienced my fair share of flame wars (the online equivalent of a verbal argument, only you have the time to craft a clever retort). I've even engaged in a few, though I have to admit I derive little pleasure from them. While emotions would occasionally run high (CompuServe has moderated forums, so users were banished to private forums when they got personal), the exchanges always seemed somewhat harmless. For the most part they still are, but when faced with someone making wild accusations against you and your fellow employees, what are you supposed to do?

An interesting Usenet discussion recently turned ugly when a person suddenly interrupted the conversation and started attacking this magazine. As our unofficial presence on the Usenet, I addressed each point as politely as possible (as I always try to do). Receiving criticism is part of the job, and while it's not an aspect anyone here relishes, we do realize that we're not above the same sort of jibes we direct at the games. As always, constructive criticism is invaluable, which is why every e-mail is read and every newsgroup posting taken seriously.

However, this particular thread took a turn to the surreal when the poster suddenly directed his venom toward me personally. Not ever having met the man, I was slightly taken aback. He started by calling me a "poser," and claimed I was a proponent of the schlock produced by the "entertainment-multimedia-Hollywood complex" rather than "real" games (one of which he is developing).

This continued on for about a week, with the crescendo being a post that accused me of being a communist, a claim that hasn't been fashionable since the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950s. After mentioning offhandedly that I'd just watched the film version of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which used the Salem Witch Trials as a metaphor for the McCarthy hearings, he cleverly responded that he'd never seen a communist that did not use the witch-hunt defense or suggest that any accusation of communist leanings was completely irrational.

All I could say at this point is, "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you no sense of decency?"

Being in the public eye obviously leaves you open to these sorts of attacks. In this instance, the messages were initially quite disturbing. Someone who isn't familiar with the magazine or myself could be misled by these postings, as absurd as they may have been. As the posts became increasingly surreal, however, the claims were rendered impotent.

What is it that drives the perpetrators of these online vendettas? Psychologists have said that within the human psyche there exists an urge to lash out at an anonymous "other" when we feel justified. The anonymity of the online experience empowers people to act out a role, a sort of virtual role-playing. While the distance and empowerment of an alias or an e-mail account may allow you to tell someone to "shove it" (or worse) with the slightest provocation, would you even think about doing the same to his or her face? If you're hiding behind a bullying persona, is there a point where your online role-playing start to damage the real lives of real people?

How should individuals and companies protect themselves from these sorts of attacks? Do you ignore them and wait for them to go away even though claims, no matter how outrageous, can become fact in the absence of irrefutable proof otherwise? Do you reply, effectively throwing fuel on the fire and boosting the poster's ego, as well as leading some people to inexplicably assume the charges have some merit? After witnessing enough of these online assaults, the answer, unfortunately, is that there's no answer. There is no way to defend yourself in the online public court. It's an act of futility – the burden of proof is on the accused, and every piece of evidence that proves your innocence can be twisted by the online persecutors into something incriminating. The end result is that industry people are being driven from online discussions, where their input might provide valuable insight.

There is no easy solution to this problem. All we can do is consider what we do virtually to be a reflection of what we do in the real world – unfortunately, this is contrary to the whole concept of virtual reality and online role-playing. Josef Stalin once said "To choose one's victims, to prepare one's plan minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance, and then to go to bed... there is nothing sweeter in the world." Old Joe wasn't talking about premeditated Usenet attacks (he was apparently talking to a colleague before signing almost 40,000 death warrants). Nonetheless, it is disturbing to witness the level to which some people obsess, and derive pleasure from disrupting other people's real or virtual lives. And it's getting worse, threatening the community of gamers who gather online to actually talk about playing and enjoying games.

And for the record, I'm not really a communist, but I play one online.

–Steve Bauman, Editor

Quoted in: Robert Conquest, "Lenin's Guffaw," in *New Republic* (Washington, D.C., 15 Sept 1986)

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

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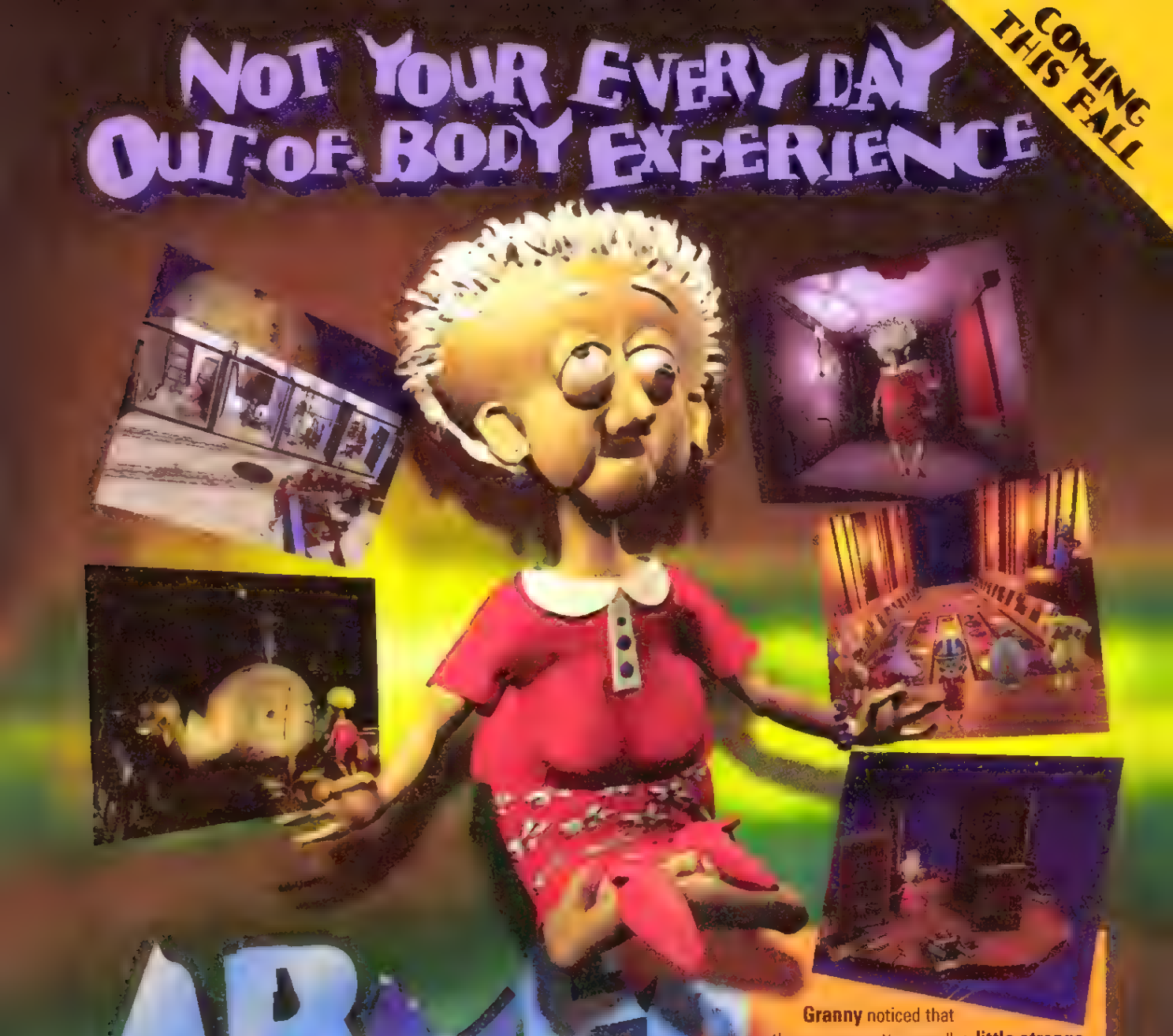

ARMED delirious

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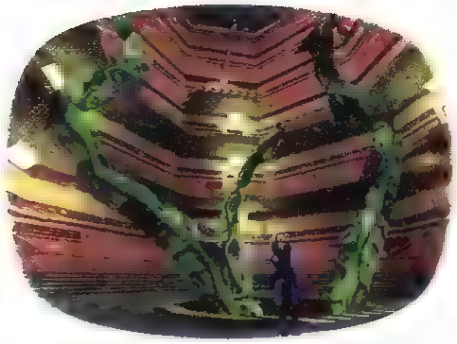
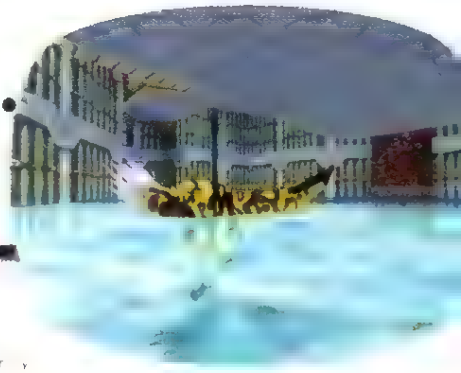


SHE'S SMART, HAS A GREAT PERSONALITY, AND KNOWS THAT THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STERNUM.



SHE'S A TRAINED GOVERNMENT ASSASSIN WHOSE ONLY GOAL IS TO SILENCE YOU PERMANENTLY. AND YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF PLACES TO HIDE.

THINK THE ONLY OPPONENTS WORTH FIGHTING ARE THOSE YOU MEET IN A DEATHMATCH? THINK AGAIN WITH HALF-LIFE'S ADVANCED CHARACTER AI. YOU'LL BATTLE ENEMIES SO SMART, YOU'LL SWEAR THEY'RE ALIVE. THEY'LL TAKE COVER, RECRUIT OTHERS AND WORK TOGETHER TO BRING YOU DOWN.

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HALF-LIFE

F/A-18

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GRAPHIC SIMULATIONS

Sierra expands Diablo

Hellfire to add new areas, enemies, weapons and character classes

Although several of the details are subject to change pending the official announcement by Sierra's Public Relations Department, *Hellfire* is the name of the official *Diablo* expansion pack. Produced with the full blessing of *Diablo* developer Blizzard Entertainment, *Hellfire* will include two new areas to explore from town, each with four levels apiece. While the first area looks somewhat different thanks to its new textures, the second offers an organic theme (including overgrowths of pulsating vines) that should make for some eerie, tension-filled play. Where these levels fit in as far as difficulty is still unknown.

The developer of the expansion pack, Synergistic Software, expects to ship it with almost twenty new creatures, several of which were in the original but never activated. Among the new recruits are several arachnoid creatures, Gravediggers, the Biclops (two heads, each sporting an eye), and what could only be described as "little mutant Fry Guys."

Gamers can also wield a new assortment of weapons and armor. In addition, there will also be oils (potions with permanent or semi-permanent effects), and a much tougher Diablo to face in Hell. In answer to some of the common concerns voiced by gamers, Synergistic will implement a hot key for doubling the rate of travel in town, difficulty options for solo play as well as multi-player, and *perhaps* more quests.

It remains to be seen whether Blizzard will sanction the addition of two new character classes. If Blizzard is agreeable, expect to make friends with a new Druid. The Druid possesses exceptional hand attack skills, and a high intrinsic armor rating. As somewhat of a compromise between the hardened warrior and the initially fragile mage, the Druid should fill the male-deprived gap between the two seemingly opposed character types. At press time, we were unable to disclose the other character.

Solo and network players gain the most from *Hellfire*, since most of these changes won't be implemented for use with Blizzard's battle.net service. Sierra intends to introduce features that *Diablo* addicts have pleaded for, while still keeping intact the simple but addictive qualities that made the original such a smashing success. Come this Halloween, The Great Pumpkin might be too busy in the catacombs to visit. If all goes well, though, you just might be too busy battling the New, Uglier, Scarier Diablo to notice the empty Pumpkin Patch. *Tim Royal*

Mindscape paints it Blackstone

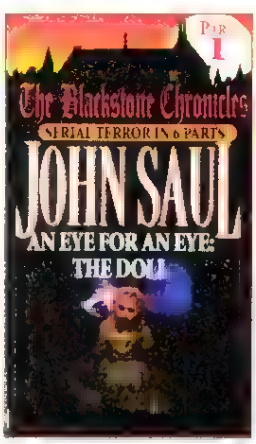
Book series to be turned into a Legend-ary adventure

MINDSCAPE, INC. HAS ANNOUNCED AN agreement with author John Saul to bring a computer game based on his book series *The Blackstone Chronicles* to your PC. The game, cleverly dubbed *John Saul's Blackstone Chronicles: An Adventure in Terror* is being developed by Legend Entertainment. It's scheduled for release in the summer of 1998, shortly following a three-night ABC miniseries adaptation of the books. The book series, which has been released in multiple installments, has sold more than 6.5 million copies worldwide

The spooky guy in the painting puzzle

The game will be set in the same small New England town as the books The majority of the game will take place inside an abandoned asylum in the center of town. Players will explore the asylum, solve puzzles, and eventually try to discover the source of a an evil presence that's haunted the town for years.

In a prepared statement, Saul said he'd envisioned the series as a computer game right from the start. "I had always wanted to develop a computer game from a book, and *The Chronicles* seemed a natural, given the six separate but interrelated tales. As the serial novel developed, it became clear that the secrets that were only hinted at in the prologues to the six books could be far more interestingly developed in the computer game format than on paper." He went on to say, "I'm thrilled that the entire *Blackstone* experience is about to be given the added dimensions that only computer gaming offers, and I think the combination of the two media forms will bring a new level of involvement to both the computer gamer and the reader." *–Steve Bauman*



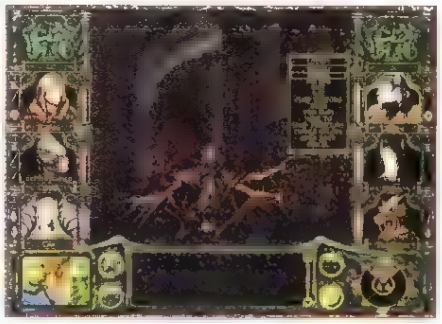
Wizardry VIII

Memories of Lost Guardia ignite

FIRST LOOK HAS IT ONLY BEEN 17 years since *Wizardry* sprang from the loins of Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead? 17 years and numerous products later, Sirtech is jumping on the technological bandwagon and will be giving its latest *Wizardry* a 3D engine. Baby *Wizardry 8*, still embryonic, will bring us back into the storyline begun in *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* and *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* and take us through to some piece of *dénouement*.

The look may be all-new, but the features players have seen since the dawn of *Wizardry* will be back: detailed, customizable characters; a party atmosphere with up to six companions in an epic quest with multiple beginnings and endings; turn-based combat. Although combat will still be *essentially* turn-based as before, the new combat system features some of the biggest changes incorporated overall. It will now be possible to fight monsters from a distance, attacks can take place from more than one side, and there will be new options that bring combat into what will feel like a "mix" of real time and turn-based. Area effects and ranged capabilities are expected to enhance the game's magic spells and realms.

The character system will now include personality options. Instead of walking stone-faced through the melee, the characters will now interact with each other and the world around them – all according to inherent character traits. New professions and skills will be available, and they are, as the rest of us sleep, working 'round the clock on play-balancing. Import your party from *Crusaders* or *Wizardry Gold* and take a jump into the *next* seventeen years. *–Cindy Yans*



Attack of the amber weevil

Wizardry VIII • Sirtech • Windows 95

Gabriel Knight 3

Modern day horror again has its knight

FIRST LOOK AFTER HIS IMPRESSIVE outing last year, the return of Gabriel Knight was a certainty. Sure enough writer Jane Jensen is back with to bring fans the third installment of the series. *Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*. Once again, *Gabriel Knight* will be making a technological advance over the previous entry by offering a brand new 3D engine, as opposed to *The Beast Within*'s reliance on full motion video

Utilizing what the developers have dubbed the "G-Engine," Sierra has made assurances that the game will take full advantage of the latest 3D hardware and high end systems, but remain configurable enough to run on lower end systems. More intriguing than the game's good looks is the game's use of artificial intelligence. The non-player characters will interact with each other, move through the world and have certain agendas that they will carry out independent of Gabriel or Grace, which, Sierra hopes, will lend a stronger feeling of realism to the overall story and environment

This time around, Gabriel finds himself in a small European village at the behest of a dethroned royal to investigate a recent rash of bizarre, possibly supernatural goings-on. Soon, the royal's son is kidnapped and Gabriel finds himself deep in a mystery of both supernatural and political proportions. While the game is heavily narrative, the new 3D engine and AI will supposedly afford the player a free reign of the environment and the ability to stray from the main story to pursue sub-plots. Fans of the series will definitely want to stay tuned, and gamers who like good gothic adventure will likely want to keep an eye out as well. *Gabriel Knight 3* is due in summer '98. *–Jason D'Aprile*

The level of detail shown in this hotel hallway is impressive

Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned • Sierra • Windows 95

FIFA: Road to the World Cup 98

EA Sports readies the latest simulation of the world's most popular sport

FIRST LOOK THE *FIFA* SERIES OF soccer games has received the most consistent praise of any of EA Sports line of sports games. However, *FIFA 97* had its critics, and the 1998 model, now christened *FIFA: Road to the World Cup 98*, will try to address many of those criticisms and add enough new features to maintain its lead over the competition.

That's using your noggin'

With a name change that eliminates the worldwide soccer/football confusion (well, only the U.S. seems confused) and developed by the EA Canada team responsible for previous entries in the series, *FIFA 98* will allow you to control one of 172 nations through the preliminary qualifying rounds in any one of six international confederations. Your goal: win the right to play in one of the 30 spots reserved for the final qualifying round in France, which will put you in line to win the whole thing. In addition to this tournament, there is a league play option that offers an additional 193 international clubs in 11 different leagues

Improvements include improved polygonal models for the players (with the truly surreal detailed facial features and hair styles), 3D card support, new weather effects and night game conditions, and the promise of enhanced AI that provides more advanced offensive and defensive skills. Additional features include 16 outdoor and one indoor stadium, authentic team chants and crowd sounds, introductions by Desmond Lyman, and play-by-play from John Motson and Andy Grey. But what about that guy who yells, "goooooaaaaaaaallllllllll-ll!!!!!" on ESPN replays?

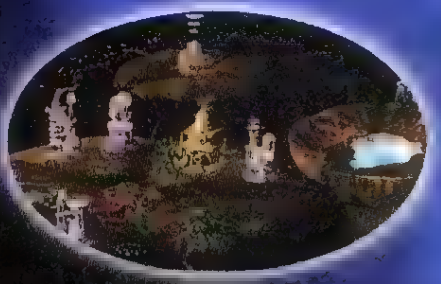
FIFA 98 is scheduled for release in November. *–Steve Bauman*

FIFA: Road to the World Cup 98 • EA Sports • Windows 95

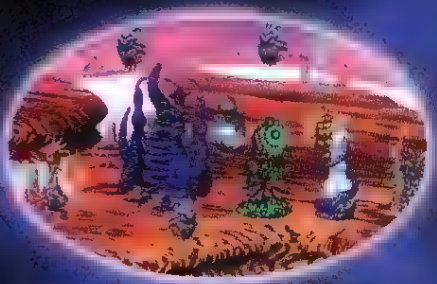
IN

VICTORY

COMES



ENLIGHTENMENT



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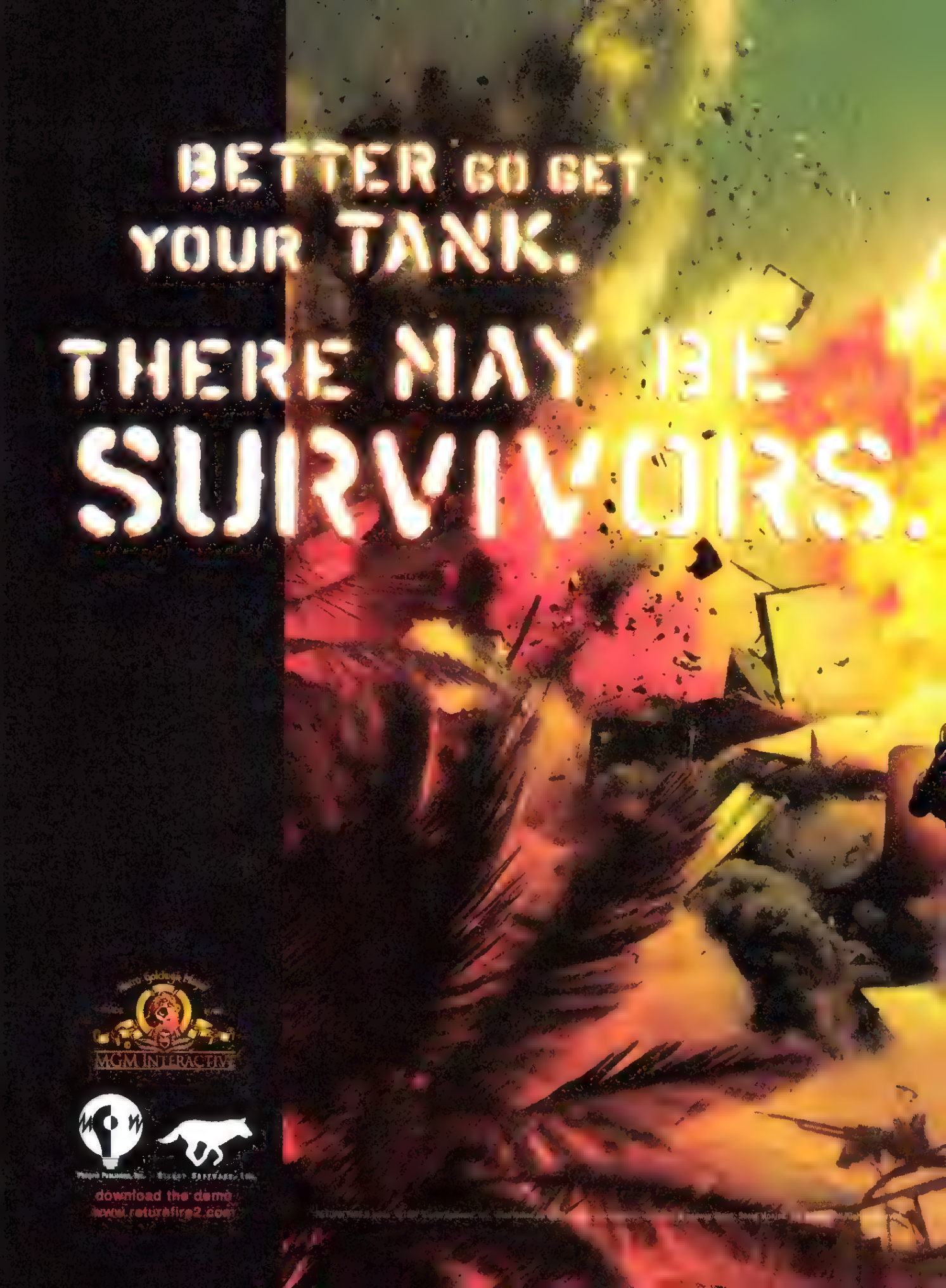
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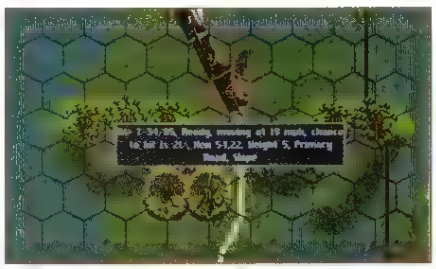
RETURN FIRE II

Steel Panthers III

Gary Grigsby revisits old territory

FIRST LOOK OKAY, YOU'VE COVERED World War II in your first game and just about every other conflict with armored action in your second, so what are you to do for the third game in the series? Short of either dropping back to World War I tank actions (and how fun would *that* be?) or going sci-fi, you try to revisit existing situations in new ways, and that is exactly what designers Gary Grigsby and Keith Brors and the crew at SSI are attempting for *Steel Panthers III – Brigade Command: 1939 1999*.



This latest version covers multiple eras of armored conflict

This third game is built on the same basic engine as the first two with two major exceptions: the scale is now at 200 yards per hex, and units are now platoon-sized instead of individual vehicles and squads. The larger map sizes and troop densities allow for recreations of battles up to brigade or even division in size, while the retention of the same basic interface should keep relearning to a minimum.

The game covers historical and hypothetical actions from World War II through to the near future. Three of the campaigns cover historical World War II situations, one covers Vietnam, one covers an alternate history, NATO vs. Warsaw Pact conflict, and the final one covers a hypothetical Middle East war around the turn of the millennium. The beta we've looked at has 18 individual scenarios, but SSI says the final game will ship with over 35. Information on the units and weapons of 20 WW II and 40 post-war nations has been included, all of which can be mixed and matched (via new multi-national forces) in the battle generator and scenario designer. Improvements in play-by-e-mail support may even allow gamers to play specific scenarios against their PBEM opponents instead of relying on randomly generated clashes. You can also expect the usual complement of film clips, sound effects, and reams of data that have characterized the other games in the series.

The new scale allows for massive armored battles

There's quite a bit about *Steel Panthers III* that looks the same as the older titles; whether these new features (and any they've not talked about yet) add enough to justify a third game in the series only some extensive gameplay with the finished product will tell. *–Scott Udell*

Steel Panthers III • SSI • DOS

BRIEFS: LucasArts announces add-on – ***Outlaws*** is getting a reload. ***A Handful of Missions***, a collection of new levels for the game, is now available as a free download at LucasArts' Web site, ***www.lucasarts.com***... **Forsaken now Revenant** – Due to "unforeseen trademark difficulties," Eidos announced that it is changing the name of its upcoming RPG/adventure title from ***Forsaken: The Thrall of Chaos*** to ***Revenant***... **MDK for the Macintosh** – Playmates confirmed it plans on delivering a Macintosh version of its popular action shooter around November... **Virgin's Logic** – The Logic Factory's upcoming ***The Tone Rebellion*** will be published by Virgin... **Kalisto finds a publisher** - MicroProse

Fighter Duel 2.0

It's fighter furball redux in Ocean's sequel

FIRST LOOK IF THERE'S ONE GAME that stands out above the others as the best pure dogfighting game, most would probably have to agree that the original *Fighter Duel* is it – nothing else could touch its recreation of fighter furball action. That game, however, took some hits from those who didn't enjoy the heavy emphasis on fighters going head-to-head, from those who wanted more involved missions and glitzier graphics... in short, from those who wanted what the next generation *Fighter Duel 2.0* seems to be promising.

Despite the title, the sequel will feature a wider variety of missions, from ground and sea attack to bombing to combat air patrols to day and night interceptions. Missions are based on a dynamic model (not canned), and Ocean says the game will sport a configurable campaign model so users can tweak their experience to their liking. During the missions you'll fly or encounter (or protect) a number of planes, from the standard (Me 109s, Spitfires, Mustangs, Zeros, etc) to the expected "wow" planes (Me 262, Komet), to the less-often-modeled (Arado 234C Blitz, Tempest V). The models for the planes are all-new (not rehashes from the earlier game), with more detail and hi-res artwork.

The Brewster Buffalo – terror of the skies (well, okay, maybe not)

To put those new models in their best light, developers Matt Shaw and Ted Jump of SPGS are working on plenty of graphics improvements. The game will run in resolutions from 320x240 on up to 1600x1200 (the rendering is resolution independent) in 256 colors, and if you have one of the supported 3D cards (3Dfx Vodoo, Power VR, Pyramid 3d, Matrox Mystique) it will run in 16 bit color; the art has even been designed with 24 bit color for future 3D hardware that supports true-color modes. A new terrain engine features data sets based on real-world locales as well as game-specific ones. The flight modeling of the original has been further enhanced, new bullet and shell ballistics models ensure the accurate recreations of gunfire trajectories ("Drat!" say all the bad shots out there), and damage modeling tracks the specific part of the aircraft that's been hit. If you're worried about speed for all this high fallutin' modeling, you could always invest in a multi-processor Windows NT system.

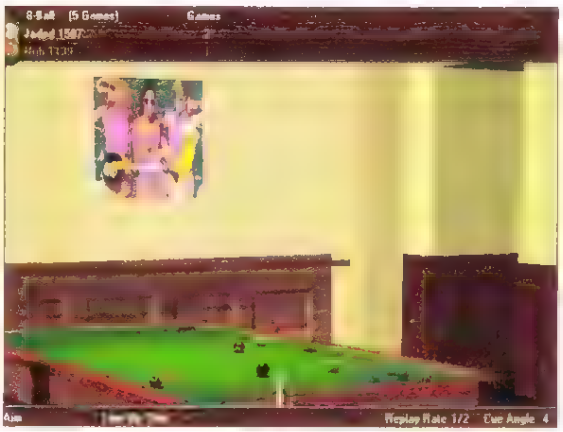
Note the damage along the Hurricane's wing and fuselage

Still a ways off (Ocean estimates first or second quarter '98), you can bet we'll be bringing you more information on this one as soon as we get our hands on it. *–Scott Udell*

Fighter Duel 2.0 • Ocean • Windows 95, NT

Virtual Pool 2.0

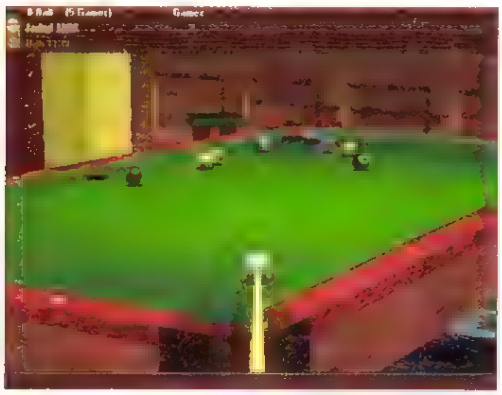
All the fun, with none of the chalk marks



Even the sexist posters on the wall look better this time out

FIRST LOOK VIRTUAL POOL WAS SO good, you might be wondering, "Why a version 2.0?" Well, *Virtual Pool 2.0* turns out to be a case of not realizing what you've been missing until you experience it. Perhaps the most radical change to the game engine is that it's now truly 3D. In the original *Virtual Pool*, a ball would never leave the table, and that's no longer true. This matters most in just whacking the balls around or in trick shots

The graphics are now texture mapped and shadowed More than eye candy, these changes make shots easier to line up, since the balls look like balls rather than like spheres rendered so perfectly that the eye can't pick a spot on them. The game simply looks *real* and it still plays nicely on a low end Pentium.



Balls are textured well enough that it's easy to find a point to aim at

The table in general is more "real," too. Rail shots require you to lift the butt of the cue stick and don't allow for backspin. Likewise shots when your ball is in contact or close proximity to another (this was never modeled in the first game). Love those masse shots? Well, be careful. This time out, it's quite possible to miscue.

Gameplay has been enhanced in minor but welcome ways. If you're attempting to make one shot and miss, but pocket a different ball, you can 'fess up and pass your turn to your opponent. You can also choose to call your shot via an overhead via of the table – simply click on the target ball, and the desired pocket.

Virtual Pool 2.0 is not finished, but unless Interplay ships it before the final layer of polish goes on, it should hold up to the high standards set by its earlier brethren. Fans of the earlier title shouldn't be disappointed. Now let's hope for *Virtual Snooker 2.0*. *–Peter Smith*

Virtual Pool 2.0 • Interplay • Windows 95

announced that it has signed a multi-product deal with Kalisto Entertainment to publish the upcoming ***Dark Earth*** and ***Ultim@te Race*...** **October's Day of Thunder** – Sierra announced ***The NASCAR Grand National Expansion Pack***. It will include 12 new tracks and 30 new drivers... **Clancy's Red Storm signs up with Mindscape** – Red Storm announced it has signed a long-term distribution agreement with Mindscape. First up will be ***Tom Clancy's Politika***, followed by ***Planet Texas*** a "futuristic combat rodeo game..." **TEN Unveils Wolfram** – TEN has announced ***Wolfram: Metal of the Ancients***, an exclusive, online-only game from Bolt Action Software. It allows 32 players on

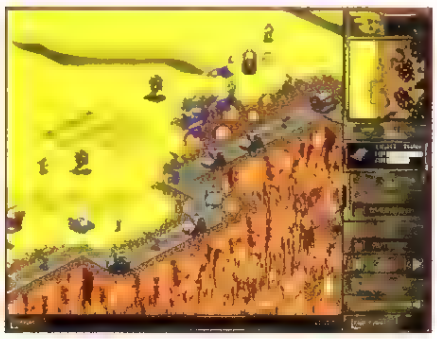
Liberation Day

Calling Will Smith. Where are you, Will Smith?

FIRST LOOK NO, IT'S NOT A SEQUEL to last year's movie *Independence Day*; rather, it's a sequel to this year's game *Fallen Haven*. The first game got a decidedly mixed reception from gamers and critics, but Interactive Magic says they've taken the lessons learned from that product to create *Liberation Day*

The story for the new title takes off where the last game ended. After a bitter struggle, the exhausted Tauran invaders of New Haven won the day; humanity, however, is back and looking to retake the planet. The Taurans haven't stood still, and are now in possession of "a mystical and magical gem" called the Seer Stone, a stone with which they've enslaved two other races, the Shadamer and the Subb-lo. As the pesky humans, you'll attempt to avenge the defeat you suffered in *Fallen Haven* and to free the enslaved races; as the Taurans you'll fight to exterminate the human threat once-and-for-all

Thick jungle foliage creates tough tactical situations, especially for an armor-heavy force



On the other hand, desert terrain is perfect for long-range weapons

The biggest new feature for *Liberation Day* is a multiplayer mode. Via modem, LAN, or Internet up to four players can compete in either cooperative or deathmatch play. In deathmatch it is, of course, every critter for itself, but in cooperative you each command specific sides (you just can't fire on your teammate). The single-player mode has strategic campaigns with tactical missions; for multiplayer you instead build up an army and then compete on the tactical battlefields. The game features some 45 different land, air, and sea units, 50 structures (some of which play an important tactical role), three different strategic resources, and a variety of technology fields. Modifiable terrain will prove important during battle – burn a tree down, for example, and you'll no longer be able to hide a unit behind it.

Interactive Magic promises many other tweaks and improvements to the game system; we'll get a chance to see how they've done this Fall. *–Scott Udell*

Liberation Day • Interactive Magic • Windows 95

Microsoft

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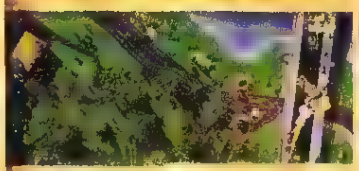
Getting ~~yourself~~ your men surrounded is very bad for morale.

mortar or flamethrowers... mortar or flamethrowers...

Nothing cleans out a town quite like flamethrowers.

To do in Holland:



Smell tulips, admire windmills,

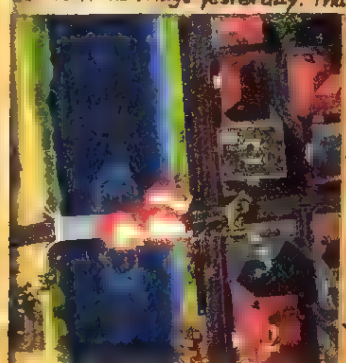
secure bridgeheads.

Unless of course you want to win.

Too tired to march?

"Look ol' boy, ignore everything I say and you'll do smashingly."

You took the bridge yesterday. That doesn't mean you'll have it today.



Cozy up in an empty blast crater.

CLOSE COMBAT
A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Operation Market Garden was Field Marshal Montgomery's brilliant über-plan to send the Nazis scampering back to Berlin once and for all. And even though it began with the largest airdrop in military history, it ended up a complete and bloody failure. Maybe you can do better. With the right amount of strategic brilliance you can take the fifth and final bridge that Monty so unfortunately missed. It's simple. Recreate history and you will fail. Rewrite it and well, anything's possible. **www.microsoft.com/games/closecombat**

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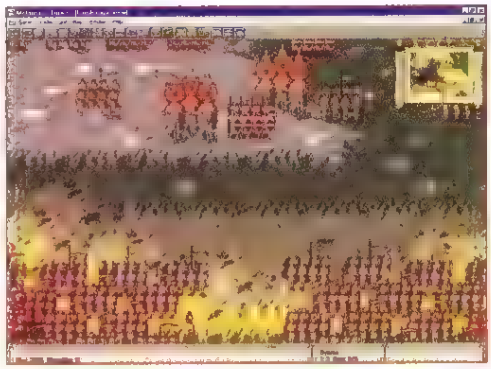
Great Battles of Hannibal

Cannae do as well as the first game in the series?



Changes to the terrain are the most obvious modifications implemented for Hannibal

FIRST LOOK FOLLOWING THE FORMULA that's worked so well for TalonSoft, Interactive Magic's *Great Battles* series continues with *Hannibal*. Eleven battles trace the career of the famed Carthaginian general, including Lake Trasemene, Ilipa, and, of course, Cannae, one of the most famous battles of *any* era. As with the first game in the series, *Alexander*, players may also choose to fight against Hannibal in any of the battles.

Just a portion of the battle line at Trebbia

While *Hannibal* uses the same basic engine as *Alexander*, Interactive Magic touts several improvements they are making to the system. The most obvious changes are visual; the terrain has been given more textures, trees won't obscure your view of units in forest hexes, and small graphic touches (small buildings, rocks, and so forth) now dot the map. Gamer feedback has led to several improvements in the user interface: an undo button allows players to take back unit moves that haven't already had an effect on the battle, and when playing as the Romans gamers get new "line move" and "manipular extension" buttons.

A different era and different forces mean several changes and additions to the simulation part of the game. New units include the famous Roman Legionnaires and Scorpiones, Hyrcaneun ox carts, and new Indian and African elephant units (I Magic does like their elephants!). Interactive Magic says that the Roman armies will use accurate Roman tactics, and that the legions will have a characteristic "checkerboard" formation. In-game reinforcements in some of the battles should keep gamers on their toes, and victorious cavalry can harass defeated opponents right off the map

If all goes as planned, *Hannibal* should be storming across the gaming Alps in time for some holiday battles. *–Scott Udell*

Great Battles of Hannibal • Interactive Magic • Windows 95

the Internet to battle it out in futuristic hovertanks... **3DO expands Internet strategy** –3DO announced several moves to expand its presence in the online gaming market. The new products announced are: ***Meridian 59 Revelation***, ***Renaissance*** and ***Might and Magic Online***... **Online record** – Origin announced that ***Ultima Online*** achieved a worldwide record for the largest number of people playing simultaneously in the same virtual world when 2,850 players hooked up at the same time during the beta phase. In other news, a player was kicked out of the beta phase of UO for exploiting bugs. This came to light after he managed to successfully **kill Lord British**... ■

SepterraCore

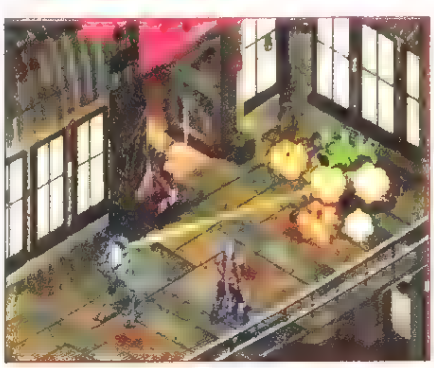
A journey to the center

Portrait of Grubb, righteous robot repairman

Maya inherited her hair from Marge Simpson

FIRST LOOK ICOM SIMULATIONS. A group which in the eighties created the popular title *Deja Vu*, evolved into Rabid entertainment around 1993. Eventually integrated into Virgin Interactive, Rabid is currently working on two titles: a 3D shooter known as *Violent Seed* and this fantasy/sci-fi roleplaying game.

You are an inhabitant of the planet Septerra, a layered environment where concentric World Shells create seven unique ecosystems, and Bioengineering has ushered in a revolution of societal changes. You are a Junk Scavenger from World Shell 2, which has been the recipient of junk galore from the upper shell, inhabited by an ancient society known as The Chosen. The Chosen are mass consumers and hence produce mass waste, all of which trickles down into your shell. Their decision to journey to the core of the planet involves you in their search for their Creator – who may only be revealed when the world's Legacy is solved



A laser beam handily wastes the green foe

The game boasts hundreds of locations and fifteen chapters of gameplay. You may choose from eight companions, each with a unique background story and motivation. There is Lobo, created as a combat cyborg, lost in battle and then reprogrammed to allow him to exercise free thought ("Number Five alive.); Grubb, the robot repairman with a fabulous punk do, who feels responsible when others use his creations for selfish purposes; and Led, half army mechanic, half Barbie, who yearns for adventure and excitement against the wishes of her father – to name but a few

Fast, clock-based combat is combined with a deck of Fate Cards that, when properly combined, will create new combat effects. Characters and enemies are 3D pre-rendered models, and backgrounds are 3D layered, all in 16-bit color. We should see the title in the first quarter of 1998. *–Cindy Yans*

SepterraCore • Rabid Entertainment • Windows 95

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M1A2 ABRAMS™

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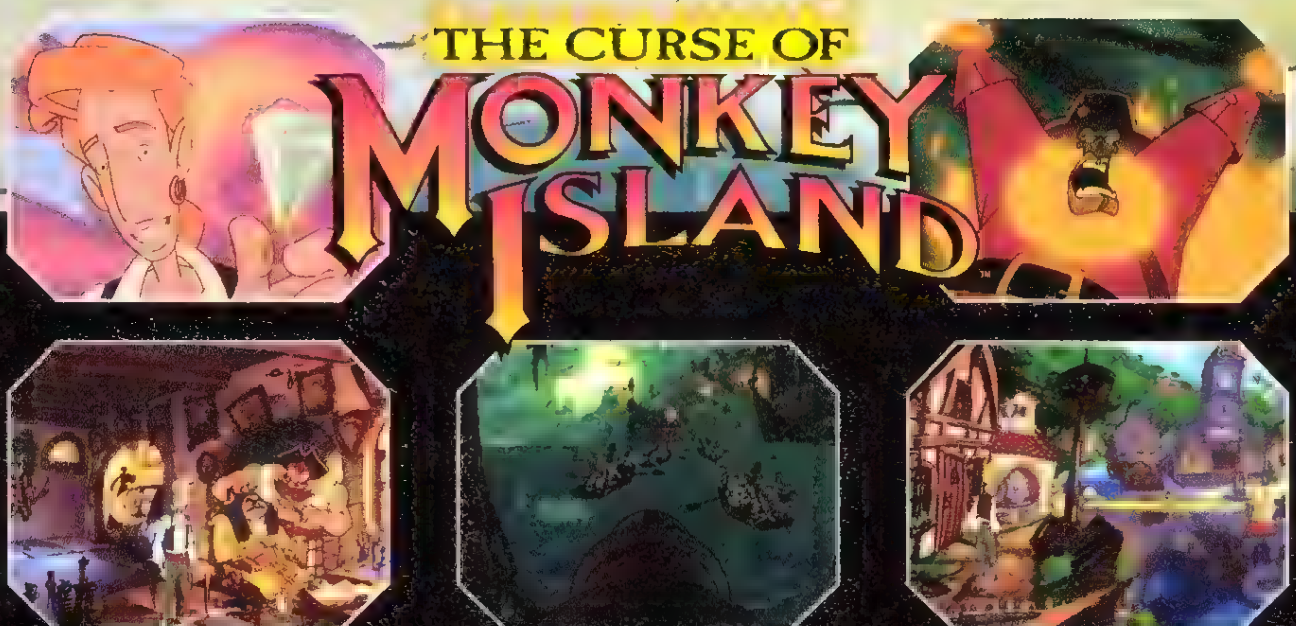

Presenting the long-awaited third installment in LucasArts' classic adventure series, Monkey Island. With features like 30-plus hours of gameplay, 8,000 lines of hilarious dialogue, oodles of challenging puzzles, high-resolution graphics, film-quality animation and a few surprise celebrity voices. Not to mention vegetarian cannibals and a guy named Snuggleeakes. So get ready to embark on a rollicking, swashbuckling graphic adventure where the seagulls have better aim than the pirates, and the sharpest weapon is your wit. For Windows 95 CD-ROM

Check out the playable demo in select magazines or download it from our Web site at www.lucasarts.com

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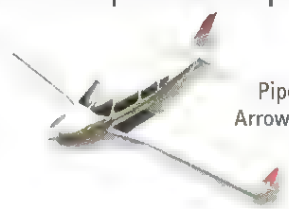

LOOKING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES. www.lglass.com

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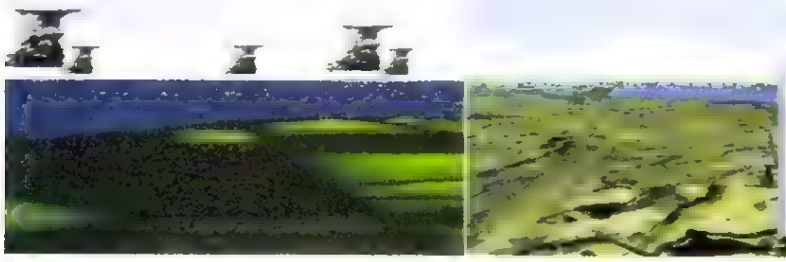
Unlimited.

Actual screen shot from Looking Glass' Flight Unlimited II

Fly the DeHaviland Beaver Seaplane in Flight Unlimited II and actually land on water. Flight Simulator may have water, but it sure doesn't have a seaplane.

"Microsoft should have cause for concern...Flight Unlimited II's stunningly rendered world is only exceeded in excellence by its smooth interface."

"E3's Best of the Best"
Computer & Net Player



When we say "the most realistic weather conditions," we mean it. In Flight II, thunder clouds actually float across the sky as they unleash a downpour. Exactly what are those in the sky in Flight Simulator 6.0, rock formations?

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Might and Magic VI
The Mandate of Heaven

New World executes a half gainer into 3D, and there's no turning back

A dragon flies over a small village in the northwest – looking for his next meal... A meteor comes out of the sky, crushes the dragon like a gas-filled maggot, crashes into the ground and bursts into flame. Before you can say, "Ewwww, yuck," winged and walking demons emerge from the fire, raise havoc and begin to destroy the town. Meanwhile, four teenagers have been cutting school and are hence picnicking outside the town when this is happening. They see the destruction and begin running, and the demons (wondering why the kids are not in school no doubt) begin to chase them. They are miraculously rescued and teleported the hell out of there. The village and all its surrounding areas are destroyed by the demons and become a wasteland. Several years later, after the cruel pimples of adolescence have disappeared, the four now-adult adventurers emerge. Their town is New Sorpigal, in honor of *Might and Magic I*, and they are now available to the gamer for a new expedition – into the world of *Might and Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven*.

The story of the medieval side of the game revolves around descendants from the *Heroes of Might & Magic II* story. In *Heroes II*, King Roland Ironfist defeated his brother, Archibald, who is *still* a stone statue in the library. Roland has been single-handedly ruling the kingdom for a few years with his wife, Catherine, soliciting donations and renting out the Lincoln Bedroom. Lord Kilburn, one of his main ranger-guys, has been killed and the rumors of devils and unrest in the northwest must be investigated. Roland travels toward the northwest and becomes "detained," leaving his son Nicolai (the Boy Prince) and his regent Wilbur Humphrey (the paladin with blinders) in charge of the kingdom. The absence of Roland gives rise to the question as to whether or not the Ironfist Dynasty will retain the Mandate of Heaven without him there. (To all except several readers of V. C. Andrews novels, the Mandate of Heaven is the "divine right to rule.") The non-medieval side of the game? Well, those familiar with the previous *Might and Magic*s will have remembered a certain taste of, shall we say, anachronism? 'nuf said.

It's a whole New World

Back in 1986, *Might and Magic I* was released for the Apple II. After playing *Wizardry* and *Ultima* back in the early eighties, Jon Van Caneghem, president and god of New World, said "I can do this," – and did. Nowadays if anyone says, "I can do this," the answer is, "Oh sure. You and what team of 50 programmers, artists, animators and writers?" But in the good ol' days, one man *could* do it all. In fact, until recently, *Might and Magic*'s programming had been done almost exclusively by Van Caneghem and executive producer Mark Caldwell. Why not now? It's simple. The answer is 3D. If you try to build a 3D product from scratch nowadays, it's anything *but* simple. Said Van Caneghem, "True 3D... this was a whole new experience for us. The entire smooth scrolling thing is a whole 'nother animal in itself. When people ask me why there aren't many role playing games, what I tell them is 'first you gotta build *Quake* and then start from there.'" Ain't it the truth?

The three mega-tools that have been the most challenging projects for the developers are the Labyrinth and Horizon engines, and CID, the Conversational Informational Database.

Detailed two dimensional indoor scenes replace inanimate podiums of yore

Labyrinth is the indoor engine for rooms, corridors and chambers. Anyone used to a classic "dungeon crawl" will be surprised at the variety of indoor locations. They come in all shapes and sizes and are dynamically lit with point light sourcing. "We can insert a thousand points of light…" said producer Mark Caldwell – well worth the effort considering what the concept did for George Bush. Physics models for the indoor areas allow objects to light corridors and bounce off walls and each other as was demonstrated in alpha by throwing hundreds of bouncing, lit, brown bags down a tunnel. They should really have used that effect as a new spell: Bouncing Bags of Annihilation. Maybe not.

Horizon is the outdoor engine that produces height mapped terrain in which 256 pixels equals 10 feet. Unlike anything they've ever used before, it is being compared to a *Magic Carpet*-like engine. *Might and Magic* has traditionally been an outdoor game. "We always thought people liked experiencing the outdoors," said Van Caneghem, "and we remember *Might and Magic* back in the days when people did what we call 'lawnmowering.' There was something very compelling about filling in all the squares." Certainly any of us who have played the older games remember traveling up and down the terrain like eating an ear of corn, compulsively, neurotically uncovering row after row of terrain-kernels. Now, you can go up hills and down valleys and even fly. When approaching a town, you actually *experience* the visuals of nearing it. They are continually working on creating a realistic smooth-scrolling view cone – one that scrolls fast enough "Unless we've built an experience for the player that is completely smooth and realistically fast, then we've failed."

There are little details that they never imagined might have to be dealt with, such as making sure the NPC's don't cluster – or become "stuck" – or form unsanctioned labor unions. And there are always unexpected side effects, such as when the physics model was tweaked and characters began to behave like ping-pong balls…or bowling pins

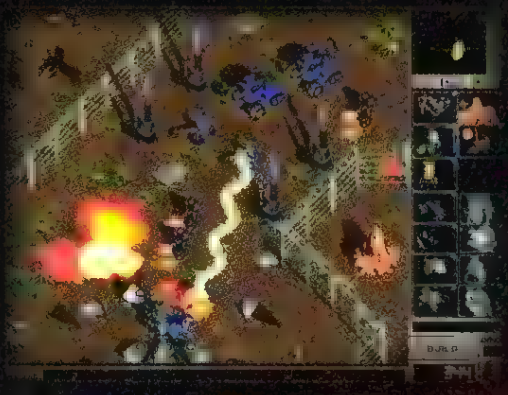
North, south, east, quest

The object of the game is to investigate the disappearance of King Roland while being thwarted at every turn by demons and a human Doomsday Cult, which is able to generate disasters throughout the land – disasters like floods, earthquakes, snowstorms in summer, lost traveler's checks. Their activities are intended to foreshadow the end of the world. So the player is charged with discovering what happened to Roland, where the demons are coming from, and what is the meaning of life? This is, of course, a broad description of the main quest, and since this is a classic RPG, it's a given that yagotcha main quest, yagotcha sub-quests, yagotcha party, armor, weapons, magic, etc. No multiplayer is available in this release, but watch out for *Might and Magic Online* – already in the works.

There are many sub-quests, one of the largest of which involves getting information from a dismembered oracle with an Obi-wan Kenobi aura. But you can't visit said oracle until you have appeased the six members of the High Council – who, as you might imagine, are not all in one place. There is a *lot* of walking around to do while appeasing, and these sub-sub quests range from the usual find-item-A-and-deliver-to-person-B, to more abstract goals. Of course the development team admits that the former are *much* easier to program. Realistically, though, designer Paul Rattner observes, "Obviously, people get tired of the loop: 'Did you do it?' 'No.' 'Well then, begone!' <time passes> 'Did you do it?' 'No.' 'Then BEGONE! Don't bother me again until you've done it!' and so on. We've tried to offer a number of other alternatives."

One of these surrounds a Merchant Queen of Venice type character who has a commerce oriented quest, which involves making sure that the prices of goods maintain a certain level so that she may continue to ship them up and down the river. Another example is that of the child prince. The little guy is bored to tears being rich and all, and (eureka!) he happens to have an item you need. He won't give it to you until you do something to make *him* happy… and not to spoil the story, let's just say that what unfolds brings to mind sideshows, trained seals and Robert Louis Stevenson.

All in all, there are about a 10 to 12 main quests, and 20 or so



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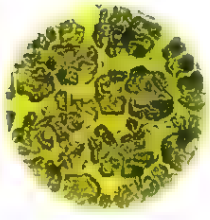

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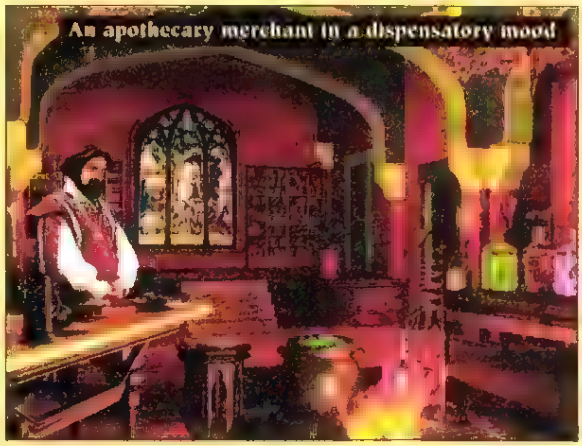
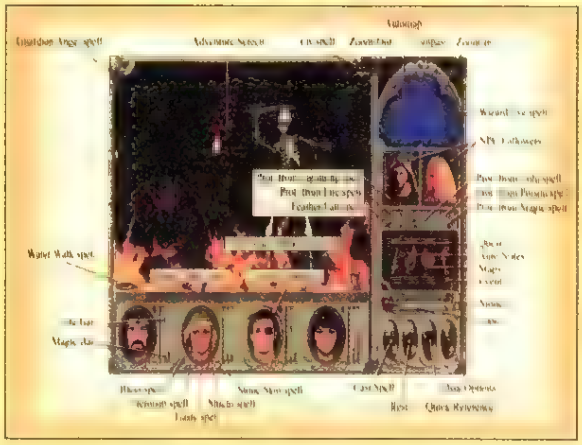




that are minor and/or regenerable. "Regenerable" refers to dungeons that change dynamically. An already-cleared dungeon, for instance, may become inhabited by something or someone associated with one of your unsolved quests and will hence need to be revisited. If you add to the quest-count the instances of gaining all possible skills and abilities, the numbers climb into the hundreds. For instance, attaining a master skill might involve finding the correct person from whom to learn it, who may be only available in a specific city during a specific season – all sorts of parameters may interfere with speedy completion of all quests. The main reason for this is the game's "Real World" environment.

You must remember this... as time goes by

Real time adds a much broader perspective to the quest portion of the game. Because the world is ongoing, you need to employ a lot more strategy than ever before. You will need to be aware at all times of the time of day, month and season. The real time environment offers many "window of opportunity" moments. If, for example, you receive a message that such-and-such a dungeon is "open for season," there will be other adventurers wandering around who might compete with you for its contents. It is not, as in previous games, full at all times, a book waiting to be read. The "Act Now" caveat should be heeded. You're going to want to figure out who is going to be where when, and of course there will be clues to the whereabouts of various characters throughout the game. The clue system is dynamic and runs off the very-nifty-if-unwieldy-to-program CID database. Before, conversation was of the SPEW variety – when you walked up to characters, they spewed out everything out they knew, and then if you forgot and went back to them they spewed it all again. Now, given the real-time clock, what they tell you must change as the game progresses. For instance, upon inquiry, an NPC will tell you that Perquattlespielmundo the Greek is currently in the next village, but if you return a week later, you'll hear that the Greek is on the Island of Toothpaste expecting the imminent birth of twin nephews (all theoretical, of course).

Since record keeping will be essential in order to encounter people and places in a timely fashion, there is (as always) a log book for notes which automatically records significant events...(well, not as *always*...remember when you actually took notes with a pencil?); and a calendar of past and future events that are date or season specific.

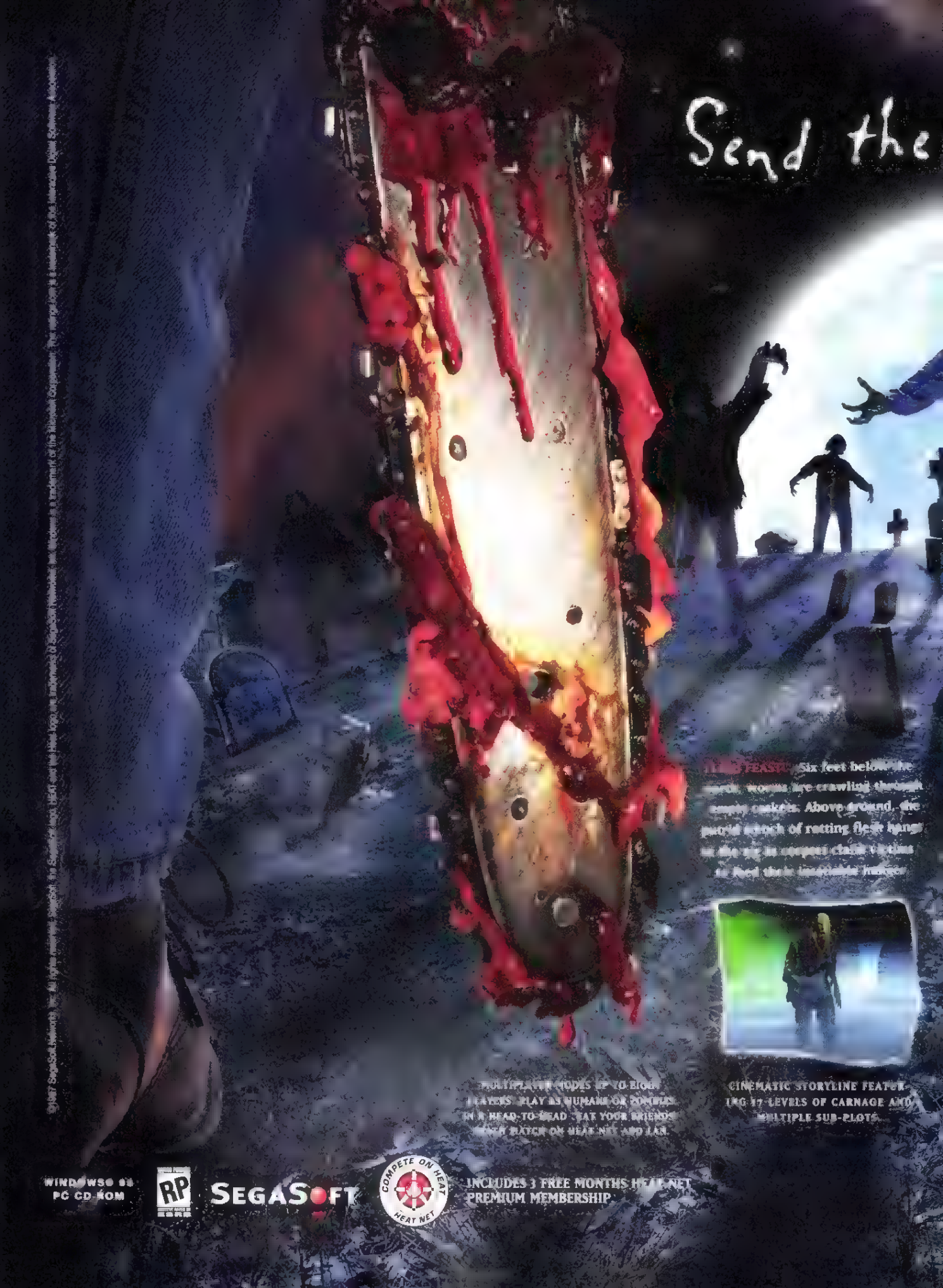
You may, however, change the real-time mode into turn-based. Why would you? In general most people will want to use turn-based mode only during combat (or if they will be constantly and indiscriminately called away from a game in progress - playing on the job, parenting, diarrhea...).

During non-trivial combat you will be able to execute your attack with much greater skill if you have the time to plan. Also, your targets will not be moving as you aim.

Robbing the Renaissance fair

The people whose portraits are being used as NPCs are a cosmopolitan bunch, many of whom were nabbed from local Renaissance fairs. Actors sat and posed for their 53+ expression composites – having to make all 53+ faces numerous times – to inject photorealistic interaction into the interface. The heads will fidget, and converse intermittently depending on your (or each other's) actions. The portrait "reactions" have been very endearing in the previous *M and M* games, and now we see expressions labeled as "Doh1" and "Doh2", and my personal favorite, expression #51, the "straining" expression that looks a lot like its provider must be passing a kidney stone...or giving birth...or something. A speaking mode will provide not true lip-synch, but an approximation thereof.

Death. Life is squeezed out of a body, until nothing remains but a cold, inanimate corpse.
Resurrection.
The corpse comes back to life, lacking spirit or soul. In order to live, it must feed.
On humans.


Send the
Six feet below the earth, worms are crawling through empty caskets. Above ground, the putrid stench of rotting flesh hangs in the air as rampant chaos victims to feel their insatiable hunger.
MULTIPLAYER MODES UP TO EIGHT PLAYERS. PLAY AS HUMANS OR ZOMBIES IN A HEAD-TO-HEAD BATTLE TO THE DEATH. BATTLE YOUR FRIENDS ACROSS THE INTERNET OR LAN.
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dead to their graves.

Again.

The dead have unexpectedly come back to life, and Tropical Island has gone from premier tourist destination to nightmarish isolation location overnight, where survival is rare.

Survive the island's many terror filled factors using weapons and wit as relentless waves after wave of ravenous undead hordes. Become the remaining survivor and outrun your escape.

There, in the catacombs beneath the complex that housed the terror of the island's resurrection, LAB FEAST awaits. IF YOU'RE ONLY CONSUMED BY FEAR, YOU'LL BE ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES.

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COMING SOON.

The many characters you will meet are available as sources of information and as potential party members as well. As before, you may invite characters to "Join," or their presence may be attached to a quest. For instance, someone may request that you rescue their daughter from the local brothel's Gregorian chant society [there is no brothel chant society in this game – this is a fictional example only]. As you drag her away, scantily clad and chanting, she becomes a party member until you deliver her from evil. During the time these intermittent characters are with you, their secondary abilities will add to the party's characteristics. You can hire anyone in the game to take advantage of their abilities. A cook in the party will cause food to deplete more slowly. A blacksmith may provide armor. Barney will cause the party to join hands and sing, "I love you, you love me…"

The sprite look was chosen over polygonal for the rendered characters, because, says Caldwell, "I think we're a long way away from creating really good-looking polygonal characters that have any type of quality that a sprite has today. I'm really happy with the sprites." A team of 22 artists are doing a bang-up job of producing the large array of weapons, chests, items, textures and animations for a very sophisticated look. Creatures range from the classic litch to the ever-popular water elemental (currently undergoing a design change to prevent it from looking like a mobile drinking fountain). Humanoid characters represent a variety of races.

Items include gems, books, scrolls, statuettes, keys, amulets, potions, etc. And luckily, a key ring will substitute for carrying a tangle of individual keys…. No more "That is not the right key for this door…" – just one example of eliminating what they call "monkey features" (trying each key in the door until you get the right one is so tedious a monkey could do it).

There are 99 spells, many of which have an elaborate effect (often light related) associated with them. The spells, as before, are acquired only after becoming proficient in their parent categories. They include: Fire (Flame Arrow, Meteor

With a modicum of skill

Might and Magic VI utilizes a skill-based rather than a level-based system. Players begin with four skills, two based upon the character class and two chosen from the skill pool. There are a total of 30 skills, and like the spells, each has a base, expert and master level.

Skill	Description	Attributes
Staff	A two handed pole equally good on offense and defense	Expert ranking in the staff will increase your armor class and master ranking will allow you to occasionally stun your opponents
Sword	The sword skill covers mostly types of blades longer than a knife	Expert Swordsmen gain a quicker attack while master swordsmen may use any one-handed sword in their left hand and another weapon in their right
Dagger	Less damaging than a sword or axe, they are very quick, sometimes enabling two for one attacks	Expert dagger fighters can wield a dagger in their left hand while using another weapon in their right. Master dagger fighters have a chance of killing a surprised opponent in a single blow
Axe	Although rather slow on the attack, axes do a lot of damage when they hit	Expert axe fighters gain a little more speed on their attacks while master axe fighters can deliver extra damage
Spear	All kinds of pole weapons with blades attached to the business end	Expert ranking in the spear will increase your armor class and master ranking will boost damage
Bow	Both bow and crossbow usage	Expert archers gain a speed increase with their weapon, while master archers can fire two arrows with every attack
Mace	All kinds of blunt trauma weapons ranging from batons to flails	Expert mace swingers do extra damage, while master ranking gives a chance to stun opponents
Shield	Directly improves armor class	Expert and master ranking in the shield increase the defensive bonus
Leather	Lightest armor a character can wear, less protective than chain or plate, it slows the character down the least	Expert and master rankings both reduce the amount the armor slows you
Chain	Medium armor, it provides more protection than leather and less than plate	Expert and master rankings both reduce the amount the armor slows you
Plate	The heaviest armor type providing the most protection	Expert and master rankings both reduce the amount the armor slows you
Fire Magic	A good source of offensive spells including spells having to do with speed and pain	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Air Magic	Defensive and informational in nature including spells having to do with accuracy and flight	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Water Magic	Equally offensive and defensive and concentrates on spells that move or change things	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions

Continued on page 50

VIRUS

THE GAME

IMAGINE...

- ...that a highly contagious virus has infected your computer.
- ...defending your PC with anti-virus weapons and vehicles.
- ...building factories, fortresses, and spy cameras.
- ...navigating through your own computer in real-time 3D.
- ...fighting your way through levels based on your own files and documents.
- ...seeking and destroying multiple virus strains.

Get ready for the most original game in years. Virus: The Game lets you journey *inside* your computer to confront the infection eating away at your files.

Travel through your graphic files in 3D and see those graphics on the walls. Battle a Virus inside a .WAV file and hear the .WAV mixed in with the sounds of combat. Build an anti-virus module inside a text file and see the text around you.

Protect your Windows® folder at all costs. If your graphic driver is infected, your screen display will corrupt. And if your mouse driver is hit, you might lose control altogether. Frightening, isn't it?

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Look for the Virus playable demo

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Shower), Air (Feather Fall, Fly), Water (Lloyd's Beacon, Water Walk), Earth (Death Blossom, Deadly Swarm), Spirit (Guardian Angel, Raise Dead), Mind (Feeblemind, Charm), Body (Cure Poison, Flying Fist), Light (Day of the Gods, Communicate) and Dark (Armageddon, Shrapmetal); and come in Basic, Expert and Master levels.

In addition to the regular release, we will be bowled over by a special Limited Edition for about 10 dollars over retail. Included are a bigger, fancier box, *Might and Magic I* through *V*, a letter of thanks and some pearls of wisdom from Jon Van Caneghem, and a number of chachkas, one of which may be…a beautifully printed cloth map of the land. "An *Ultima* map!" I chimed in. "Gee thanks," said Van Caneghem. Oops. Nonetheless, this 3D endeavor from the folks who have created some of the most beloved games in memory has already cast sweaty palms of the impatient upon all of us. Cloth map or no cloth map, we've been *Might and Magic*-less (at least in the RPG realm) for long enough. –*Cindy Yans*

Weapon design courtesy of members of the Society for Creative Anachronism

Keys, gems, books and aphrodesiacs

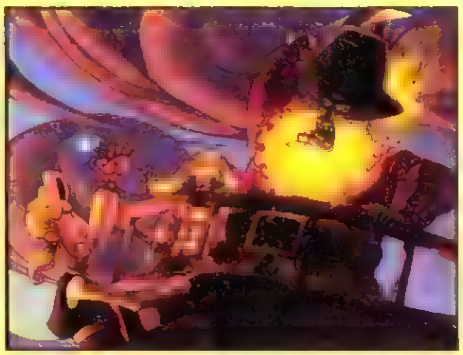
With a modicum of skill

Continued

Skill	Description	Attributes
Earth Magic	Defensive in nature and includes spells that protect, bind and strengthen	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Light Magic	A component of some of the strongest spells in the game. Usable only by Clerics and Sorcerers, it cannot be chosen before starting the game	Light magic must be learned and mastered during your travels
Dark Magic	A component of some of the strongest spells in the game, usually with some unwanted side effects. Usable only by Clerics and Sorcerers, it cannot be chosen before starting the game	Dark magic must be learned and mastered during your travels
Spirit Magic	Concentrates on spells involving life and death, including spells to raise the dead, spells that affect the Undead and influence aging	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Mind Magic	Offensive and informational- including charm, confusion, and telepathy	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Body Magic	Concerned with spells of healing and enhancement. Spells to heal, wound, and cure disease and poison are all included	Expert and master rankings permit access to greater spell-versions
Identify	Identifies an item if your character's skill is high enough	Certain items require your character to be an expert or master in this skill to properly identify them
Merchant	Reduces the resentment you create when haggling over the price of items and equipment	Expert and master merchants further improves your initial bargaining position
Repair	Allows your characters to repair broken equipment	Expert and master skill rankings allow you to repair complex items and artifacts
Bodybuilding	Adds hit points directly to your character's hit point totals	Multiply the level of this skill by the character's base class bonus to get the total. Expert ranking doubles this total and master triples it
Meditation	Adds spell points directly to your character's spell point totals	Multiply the level of this skill by the character's base class bonus to get the total. Expert ranking doubles this total and master triples it
Perception	Increases your chance of noticing a trap as it goes off and reducing or avoiding the damage it would cause	Higher skill allows you to escape stronger traps and expert and master rankings allow you to notice and escape different types of traps
Diplomacy	Reduces the resentment caused when you bribe, threaten or beg a character for any reason	Expert and master diplomacy further reduce resentment and increase the effect of your negotiations
Steal	Gives a chance to steal and item from a merchant without his or her noticing	Expert and master ranking allow you to steal from more watchful merchants. Continual use of this skill will increase merchant suspicion, making consecutive thefts more difficult
Pick Locks	Gives a chance to open a locked door based on your skill versus the difficulty of the lock	Expert skill lets you pick more varieties, and master lets you take on all kinds of locks
Learning	Directly increases the experience your character receives	Every point of skill is a percent of awarded experience that is given as a bonus. Five skill points would turn a 100 experience point award into a 105 experience point – this percentage adds up when expert doubles and master triples this bonus

You get 365 day's of computer games

Prelude to Waterloo

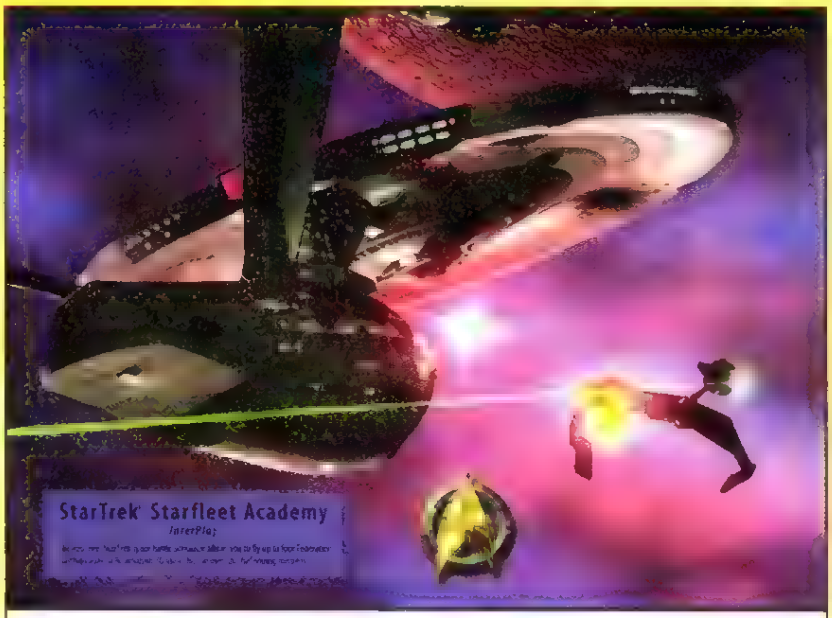


The Curse of Monkey Island

EarthSiege 3

13" wide

Star Trek Starfleet



19" deep

JANUARY

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	
18	19	20	21	22		
25	26	27	28	29		

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The logical evolution of

Falcon 3.0 debuted in December of 1992, with add-ons like *MiG 29* following like clockwork. The whole package was offered as *Falcon Gold* in 1994. After that, the Spectrum HoloByte (now MicroProse) F-16 factory fell silent, and the game slowly faded. Still, over one million "Falcon family" products shipped; the game is a franchise with a huge, loyal group of disciples.

After two and a half years of development, the new version is almost ready, and a visit to the MicroProse office afforded a peek at a pre-Alpha of *Falcon 4.0*. The game was clearly not finished but the structure is in place — this game is no longer a rumor. Only a formidable amount of routine programming work remains. The race is on to make the holiday selling season [*or maybe early '98 - ed*]. Merry Christmas, indeed, Viper Drivers!

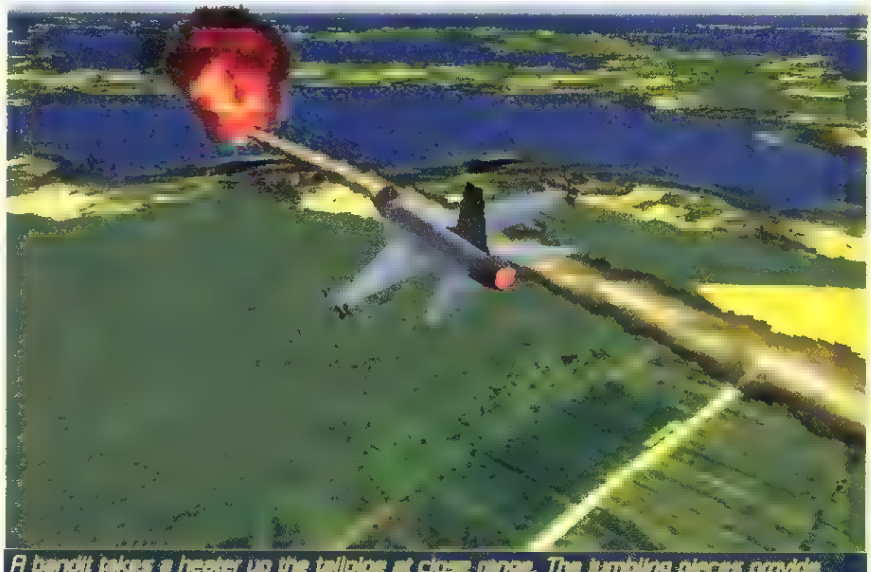
Falcon 3.0 "pushed the envelope" in almost every aspect of flight simulation. It had amazing graphics, a dynamic campaign function and detailed flight and weapons modeling; it also caused many people to buy faster computers. *Falcon 4.0* follows right in the wingtip vortices of its renowned predecessor in all of these areas. The game is a Windows 95 multi-player air combat simulation, modeling a full-scale war in Korea. Designed from the start as a multi-player operation, you may also play solo with computer AI filling the other cockpits. The graphics are all new, fully adjustable and optimized for various 3D accelerator cards. The campaign function is a real-time wargame in which you are merely one participant. The code for the flight and weapons models is totally new with realism as a major goal.

The view is magnificent

The first noticeable change is in the graphics. While the 2D graphics are very, very good, 3D is the place to be. The game employs an in-house "rasterizer" that interfaces with DirectTriangle while using DirectDraw for the frame buffer. Simply put, it supports any Direct3D card but optimizes performance for specific high-performance chipsets (like the 3Dfx) with spectacular results. The set-up screens use 800x600 resolution while the simulation display is adjustable from 640x480 up to 1280x1024. *Falcon 4.0* runs in 65,000 colors, providing an extremely realistic and "believable" environment.

The team modeled the entire Korean peninsula using satellite photographs and accurate elevation data. This full sized terrain was then texture-mapped with actual aerial photographs of rivers, lakes, forests and all the rest. Korean canyons, mountains, cities, air bases and bridges are at their real life lat/long coordinates. The graphics display also incorporates a "level of detail" system that smoothly reduces detail in distant objects while preserving the basic shape.

Terrain is not the only visual feast. All game objects are individually drawn, texture-mapped, light-sourced and Gouraud shaded. There are dozens of different aircraft types, all detailed and painted in correct color schemes. The ground vehicles are similarly



A bandit takes a heater up the tailpipe at close range. The tumbling pieces provide spectacular visual effects as they fall to earth

detailed. It's very easy to lose sight of well-camouflaged objects against the realistic, rolling terrain. You can "zoom" the display to make them twice the normal size until you get comfortable. Since it's a real time campaign, you'll fly missions around the clock. Sunrise, sunset and moonglow are all present and illuminate the 3D objects in the game, with good sunblind effects as well. Flight controls are articulated, radars have rotating antennae, vehicle turrets track, guns elevate and there are aircraft in the hangars. *Falcon 4.0* is packed with careful craftsmanship.

There's no free lunch, however. Keeping a good frame rate with highly detailed graphical content and sophisticated flight and campaign models has been the toughest challenge for the design team. In true *Falcon* form, you can turn off some of the eye candy. Nevertheless, even after turning off ground textures, and similar non essential items, you may still not be able to run a major campaign without a powerful CPU. A 90MHz Pentium may only run the Instant Action option *if* you have a good 3D card. Realistically, a 133MHz Pentium is the minimum for playing a full campaign; while it's playable on that machine, there are many additional, selectable features that will require a faster computer. These features will keep it "cutting edge" on next generation machines and provide long, interesting gameplay.

A view of the unfinished virtual cockpit. You can slew the view or lock it on to a target. This is an example of the routine type of work going on at MicroProse's Falcon factory right now

Where'd he go? Where'd he go? Gimme a vector!

Trying to shrink this huge 3D world into a 2D monitor screen is always difficult, so there had to be more than the usual fixed views normally activated by the hat switch. The standard "through the HUD" picture is available with or without the cockpit. A full screen Multi Function Display view can be selected with the same option. Like *Back To Baghdad*, you can transfer one MFD to a separate monochrome monitor using a second, Hercules-compatible video card. A scrollable virtual cockpit option exists as well, with mouse-activated switches.

There's a more intuitive, improved padlock view reminiscent of *Falcon 3.0* and another padlock view that locks your Mark 1 Eyeball to the bandit while in the scrollable cockpit (your view will pan around the cockpit to follow him). A third split-screen padlock view looks normal until the locked object leaves the standard field of view; it's then replaced by a floating image that moves around the screen, giving the relative location of the target. The left side of this screen uses bars to show the angle off both your nose and his nose and distance to your normal field of view. While it sounds complicated, it really simplifies getting your nose pointed at the bandit. There's even an ACMI recorder which can save about five minutes of your mission for later review.

Your sense of hearing provides vital clues, too, with more sound files than any of the previous games. There will be pilot chatter, situational awareness warnings from the AWACS and more. The files utilize about a dozen different actors. All transmissions use correct information in approved military formats; they are what you'd expect to hear in combat. Presently, there is no actual voice communication between players as in *Warbirds*; the required bandwidth is not available given all the other data that is continually exchanged. Technological advances may yet allow voice to be added, so stand by.

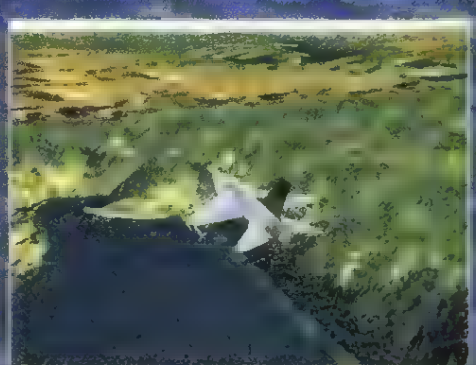
This "through the HUD" view shows the Block 52 F-16C cockpit with the new dual MFD displays. Clarity is excellent

Is it real or Is it C++?

The flight model code was completely rewritten, replaced with code using C or C++. Aircraft flight characteristics are based on "public sector" data, sources like aircraft flight manuals or *Jane's*. This info was built into each aircraft's flight model and then repeatedly "flown" on the computer and tweaked to meet published specifications. For the final polish, actual fighter pilots were employed to evaluate accuracy and feel. For example, Pete Bonanni, a USAF F-16 instructor and author of *Art Of The Kill*, is a significant contributor. Bonanni made valuable inputs to the flight model, helped design the tactics used by the computer AI and is also a voice actor.

Considerable effort is going into ensuring realistic hardware. The simulation models the Block 52 F 16C model, a newer variant than the old A model. New dual Multi-Function Displays present startlingly clear Infrared and low light TV targeting information. There's a much more capable APG-68 radar display with over ten modes. The HUD also has over ten modes to cover all aspects of navigation and weapons employment and a new HARM targeting system adds Wild Weasel capability.

This hi-tech machinery delivers the standard, substantial F-16 weapons inventory: the



This shot displays the accurate, rolling terrain that results from careful mapping of information from satellite photos and elevation charts. You're going to enjoy ripping down the canyons at 600 knots!

"Fast, challenging, and totally absorbing"
-Next Generation
"An innovative blend of action and strategy"
-PC Gamer
"Potential to be the game of the year"
-Adrenaline Vault
"Uprising forges new ground"
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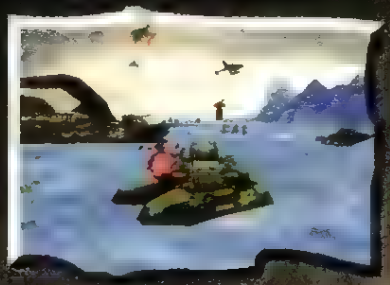
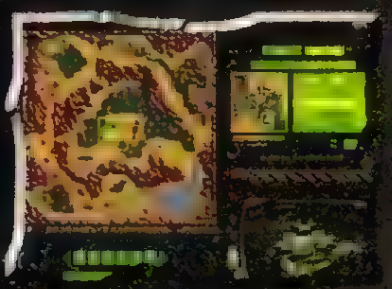
JOIN OR DIE.

[STUNNING 3-D GRAPHICS]



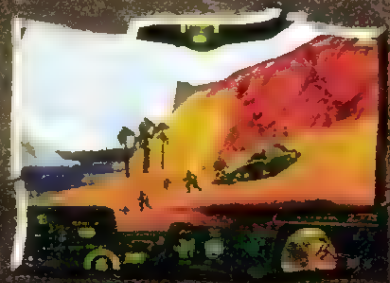
[INTENSE MULTIPLAYER]

[MASS-SCALE DESTRUCTION]



[STRATEGIC DEPTH]

[HEART-POUNDING ACTION]



[COMMAND ENTIRE ARMIES]

UPRISING

FUTURE. WAR. IMMERSION. . .

usual air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground ordnance and the all-purpose 20mm gun are at your disposal. The damage is modeled in routine flight sim fashion. Every object in the game is assigned a "point value"; when this value is exceeded, the object is destroyed. Objects are split into about ten classes, such as "thin skinned airborne" or "heavily armored ground."

Each weapon delivers a pre-determined number of hit points, depending on target classification. The flight models are affected by damage, with the airframe and avionics treated separately. This is one area where *Falcon 4.0* may not lead the simulation pack. Hits are localized on the airframe by a left, right, front, back, top or bottom system. Wing damage is different from tail damage but hitting the aileron is the same as hitting the wing. Both *Warbirds* and *A-10 Cuba!*, among others, feature highly detailed damage mapping with more specific effects on flight model performance.

Four! Four! Four games in one!

You'll be presented with four play options. Choose Instant Action and with two mouse clicks you're engaged in "me against the world" air combat. Think of Instant Action as the arcade option. You're jumping into the thick of it immediately and ultimately you're going to get waxed.

The second option, Dogfight, is a multi-player mode (although computer AI can stand in for any or all of the other 15 possible players). Essentially, four flights of four get it on. Almost all parameters are user-adjustable, in typical *Falcon* style. Dogfight features two different scenarios, Furball or Matchplay. In Furball, the goal is to be the last man airborne. Matchplay is team oriented; you' l select a required number of kills and the first team to achieve that number wins. Teams can consist of any combination of real people or computer AI pilots.

The Campaign mode is a unique, real-time simulation; when you click the button, the war begins and won't stop. There are three initial starting scenarios: both sides along the DMZ; with combat triggered by a North Korean surprise attack; South Korean forces backed into the Pusan perimeter with US reinforcements arriving; or US/South Korean forces approaching the Chinese border, provoking a Chinese intervention. Dozens of active flight plans are continually available; select your mission and go to the briefing screen. Here, the strike package composition, intelligence reports, waypoints, time to target, ordnance and even emergency airfields and procedures are given. All mission profiles are at hand: air-to-air, air-to ground, suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD), etc., and you may start at the field or en-route. Once again, you can tailor almost every aspect of the mission.

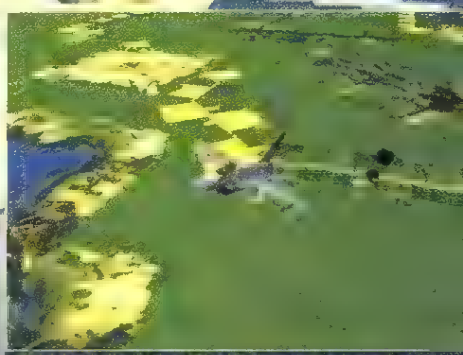
Coupled with this real-time aspect is a wargame AI that simultaneously controls hundreds of aircraft and vehicles. Your performance determines how well al allied forces in your general area do. In the main battle area this can have considerable effect, but in a less important sector, the results are not as noticeable. The AI is detailed in other ways, too. Assume you fly a successful mission against a bridge vital to an enemy tank battalion's route of march. When the tanks can't cross, they won't s't like motionless morons waiting for some ace with a wingload of Maverecks to light up the r life. The r commander, Comrade CPU, will immediately try to find another way to cross the river and achieve the objective. Similarly, if you elect to deviate from your mission orders and take out North Korea's Illustrious Leader in his palace, there will be repercussions At the very least the tank battalion will achieve its objective and get new orders, but the tanks may overachieve and seriously damage the Allied cause. Your attack might also cause immediate intervention by Chinese forces. MicroProse cla ms it s a far more detailed and 'real-time' wargame than DID's *EF2000* Wargen engine, the current front-runner.

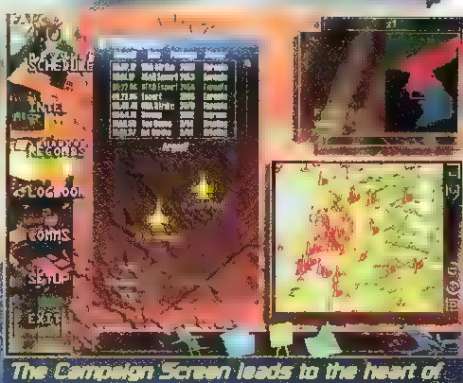
The fourth mode of the game, Tactical Engagement, consists of a training area and a complete mission builder. A few canned missions are provided for training purposes; this is the place to practice dropping iron bombs. Mainly, it provides every tool needed to design an entire mission, placing air and ground assets, and selecting waypoints and weapon loads. *Falcon* fans will be able to design their own missions and fly them cooperatively or competitively. Such player-designed scenarios will be useable in the Total Entertainment Network (TEN) arenas.

The most exciting aspect of this game is the focus on multi-player participation. There are no differences between the multi-player and single-player campaigns; you can start flying by yourself and other human players may join in at any time. There are four methods to link up and play: the usual modem and direct connect methods work for two players, with cooperative sorties and head to head play available. The LAN option should support 20-30 players in campaign action. Plans for TEN include hundreds of players interacting in each of several campaign arenas. The squadrons that form to play on-line are viewed as key to the successful retail marketing of the game and to establishing a strong on-line community for TEN.

Falcon 4.0 appears to be the logical evolution of the *Falcon* franchise, with something for everyone from the beginners to the vets. Strong multi-player capability almost assures a huge following; jet enthusiasts have been waiting their turn on-line for a long time. Expect a new *Hornet*, a new *MiG-29* and additional theaters once *Falcon 4.0* becomes established; the "factory" is back in production. *John Nolan*

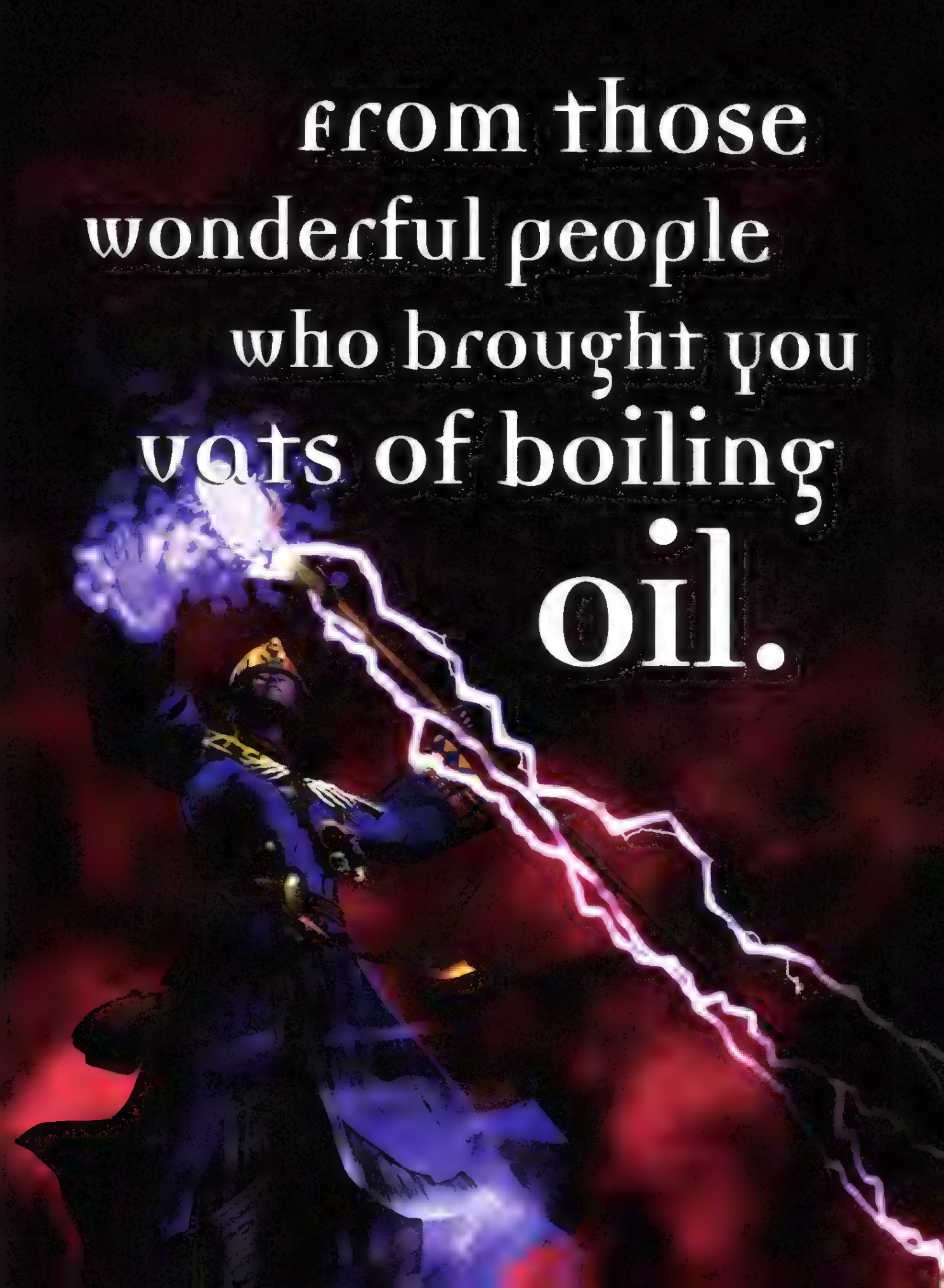
If it's Instant Action you're after this is the screen for you. Pick your mission type enemy skill level and air defenses


The victim of the AIM-9 heater comes to a sudden stop as the wreckage hits the ground. Note the tiny small secondary explosions just above the ground and the shock wave that spreads from the point of impact

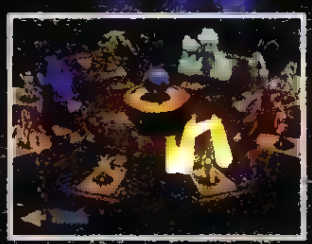

The Campaign Screen leads to the heart of the game. Mission choices are at top left, situation map top right and mission route bottom right

The most exciting aspect of this game is the focus on multi-player participation.

MicroProse • Windows 95

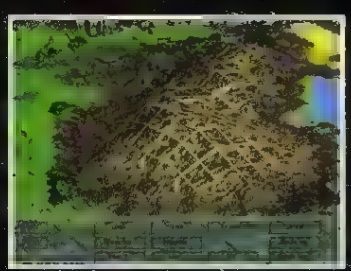

from those
wonderful people
who brought you
vats of boiling
oil.

LORDS OF MAGIC



8 magical races

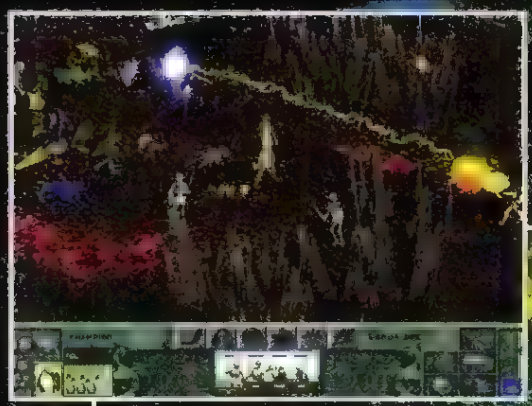
When the evil sorcerer Balkoth threatens the peaceful people of Urak with death and destruction, brave heroes with magical powers must rise up to stop the reign of terror and defeat the forces of tyranny. In Lords of Magic, the successor to the popular Lords of the Realm II, you enter a fantasy world where good and evil fight for primacy against a mystical backdrop of wizards, warriors, spells and storms, giants, gnomes, and Barbarians.



3-D terrain editor

Building on the dramatic features that made Lords of the Realm II a breakthrough in strategy gaming, Lords of Magic combines turn-based exploration and resource management with real-time combat. Join forces with others (up to six players can compete on a LAN or over the Internet) or marshal your forces to take on Balkoth and his Barbarian allies alone. You'll command up to Eighty creatures, including elves, vampires, skeletons and gargoyles, as you defeat evil and save the realm. Wielding the forces of magic through spells and artifacts of power, you can take multiple paths to victory – more choices, more outcomes, and unlimited replayability.

Lords of Magic features a true 3-D game map, with 16 bit SVGA Graphics and a powerful map editor that puts you in control of terrain height, topography, and texture.



As you explore the land of Urak, you'll battle in dark and mysterious caves, castles and dungeons.

comes a my

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SIERRA

Impressions

RP
RATING PENDING
ESRB

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select one of eight cities to be the center of your empire
in your library wizards will research spells to overpower your enemies
ical world of swords and sorcery
deep inside your wizard tower sorcerers practice their secret arts to conjure magical creatures and train new acolytes
when you confront the enemy forces of Malkoth, "zoom in" to real time combat

Sierra • Windows 95

Gorgeous underwater scenes grace approximately 1/5 of the game

Quest For Glory V: Dragon Fire

Characters of the series unite in a musically haunting RPG

How many of you have on your shelves a little game called *Hero's Quest* under a thick layer of dust? Sierra was not able to call it that for very long, so if you do have one, hang onto it as a collector's item. Instead, you hero wannabes probably have one or more of the more-acceptably-named *Quest for Glory* games. A number of years ago Lori and Corey Cole created *Quest for Glory*, which was one of the (if not *the*) first Sierra games to cross-dress. It was a truly hybrid adventure/CRPG, and the flavor continues in the newest member of the group, *Dragon Fire*. At last count there were 12800 fans signed up to the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School – fans-short-for-fanatics who have gone on strike from life until the day arrives when they'll get their hands on the latest title.

Mediterranean Nights

Silmaria-by-the-Sea, on the kingdom of Marete, has been focal in many of the *Quest for Glory* games. In this one, the silver city is in deep &*!%. The Ruler has been assassinated by a deadly poison and an unknown assailant. The world we'll see has its roots deeply embedded into the atmosphere of Greece and Greek mythology. We'll see a Hydra, Cerberus, and even enter Hades in a land with a distinct flavor of the Mediterranean. In order to solve the assassination, you must enter the Rites of Rulership, and prove your own worthiness to become King – but you won't be alone. In the single player game, other characters are vying for the same distinction; most notably, Elsa Von Spielburg from *Quests For Glory* of yore.

The Quest for Glory Team in a pile

The main quest to become King involves completing as many of the seven Rites as possible: Freedom, Conquest, Valor, Destiny, Courage, Peace and Justice. In addition to the fact that your goals will be accomplished differently depending upon the character you choose (Hero, Magic User or Thief), your ability to encounter several of the rites at *all* will be compromised by other characters' progress.

Just about every character from the earlier games is back including the supreme favorites Rakeesh (the liontaur) and Erasmus (the loony-binned) There are plenty of sub-plots including a quest to acquire the ubiquitous black bird, bringing back Katrina or Erana from Hades (where their souls ended up in the last game), and the ability to get married. That's right, you can choose your bride from the gold-digging ex-harem girl from *Quest for Glory II*, Elsa Von Spielburg (also your main competitor), Erana or Katrina. Marriage is not a requirement, but it could relieve stress ("or produce it!" I hear you cry). Certainly it produces the Plot Tree From Hell.

The stuff of which RPG's are made

Skills are improved by practice rather than being point enhanced or level-related. For instance, if you don't have a life, you might decide to spend the evening jumping in and out of bodies of water in *Dragon Fire*. At the end of the night you'll not only have missed the things that *normal* people do – you'll have an expertise in virtual swimming to show for it (which may not be a bad idea given the fact that they estimate around 20% of the game will take place under water). Down in the Thieves Guild, there's a practice dummy with little bells on, on which to practice your pickpocketing skill. As your stealth improves, the bells ring less. After you finish, you can let your cat practice for a while.

You will be able to import your stats from the last game in the series, which you will probably want to do if you've played it. If you haven't played it and intend to play *this* game, you should probably buy it now – especially if you're interested in competing with Paladins during multiplayer. You will not be able to become a Paladin in this game, so the only way to attain one is to import it… a ploy to promote sales of the not-recently-shelved title.

This time around, they've jumped on the multiplayer bandwagon. They describe it as a "slimmed down version of the single player game." You should be able to jump in, play for 30 minutes and jump back out. Multiplayer mode is intended for three players in any permutation of the main character types. Only three? Well, yes, as they insist that the game's technology is too CPU-intensive to handle more, even though their SIGS engine will support more than three. You can enter or exit the multiplayer game at any time (unless you are the host, in which case you are stuck, er…blessed). You will play cooperatively *and* competitively, as there are portions of the game that require each. [See more multiplayer discussion in this month's *Road to Nowhere* on page 188.]

Katta à la apple cart

It's got the look...

The gameworld is sizable with approximately 50 different rooms, each one having approximately three different nodes within it, which (after much mathematical calculation) turns out to be approximately 150 locations. Although the artwork uses a 256 color palette, at a glance there is a richness that appears to encompass many more.

The view switches between third and first person view, with instant camera changes they hope will give a very cinematic feel. Producer Jay Usher states, "We've taken the product from the 2D game that it always was and taken it to a 3D level – without offending the player. [Is 3D usually offensive?] They'll feel it is a natural progression. The designers are trying to present a high-res 3D rendered background that the characters can interact closely with. These backgrounds are applied after the character is already in the room."

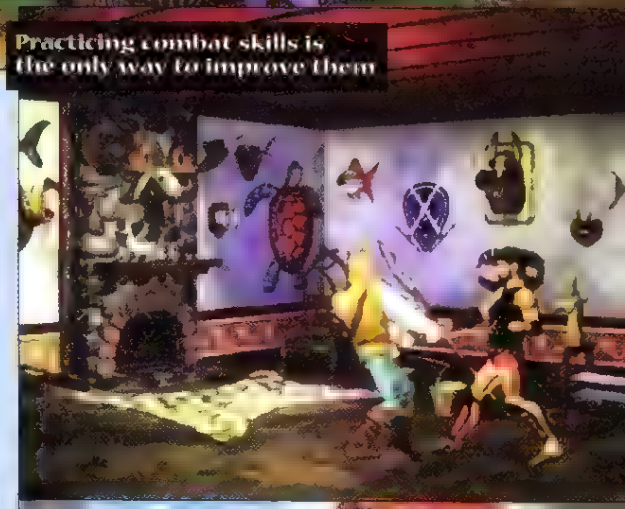
And the characters look great so far. The artists are employing a voxel technology ("volume pixel"), which allows for very high polygon count characters which don't look quite as chiseled as we are used to seeing. Once a high-count polygon based shape has been "voxelized," it no longer contains the individual polygons it started with. The programmers have said "vertices begone!" The result reveals wonderfully detailed characters with fluid animation. The underwater scenes, in which their Particle System enables bubbles to stream behind the hero as he swims, are ethereal, shimmering and lovely.

Chance's are...

Although there is much that's impressive about various aspects of the in utero game, the thing that is most breathtaking is the score. In the small but adequately-equipped sound studio (a sound-proof booth where at any moment some emcee was bound to burst in to ask the $66,000.00 question), is composer Chance Thomas. Prominently displayed in the room are his Emmy award, three Tellys and Aurora award – enough to send most folks off in a ego-bubble, never to return. Not Chance. No chance. This musician and composer has created an entire orchestral score for *Dragon Fire*, the beauty and complexity of which are indescribable. You'll need to hear it for yourself.

The man's passion for music (not just his – *all* music – he *feels* it) flows almost visibly through him. He played various strains of his composition, narrating all the while what would be happening in the game during each moment. Each room, dramatic sequence, lonely, poignant moment, are masterfully supported by the musical themes. From the haunting chant-filled melodies of the Dryad woods, to a tavern polka-like theme, to Mediterranean lyric guitar, to seemingly anachronistic "workout" music (a real comic turn), the units combine into a full musical score that is such great listening, that it will be released in addition, separately from the game. Best of all, the moods of the game have been uncannily captured in appropriate degrees. Scenes will be supported with music of grandiose pomp... or with the utmost subtlty... depending on the needs of the game. And that is the difference between a good composer and a great one. A good composer can give us work of tremendous quality – that serves itself well. A great composer can do the same, but will know how to make the music serve its purpose.

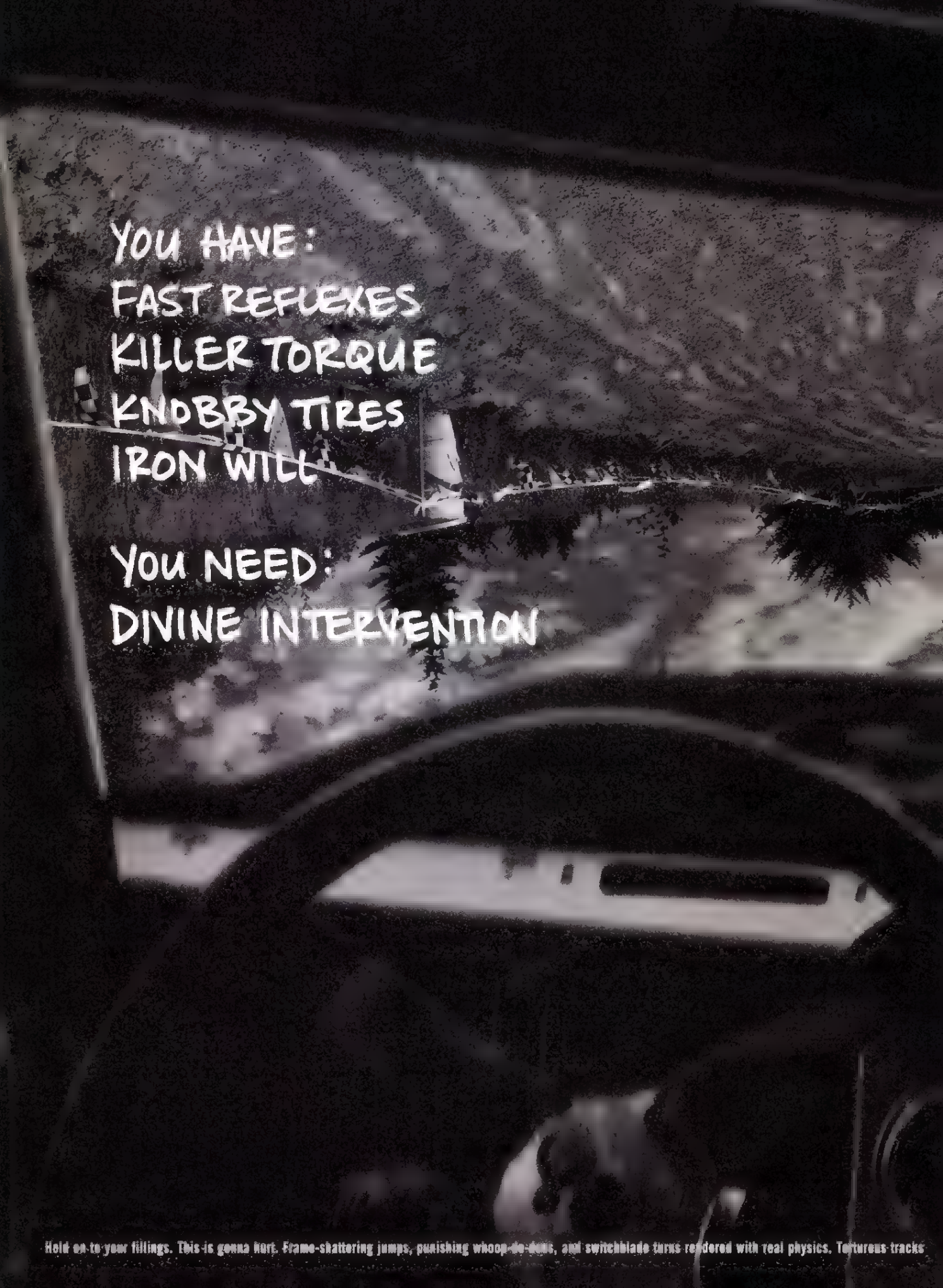
It'll be interesting to see whether this title, with its voxel technology, beefed up combat and multiplayer aspects, will be something of a non-sequitur in the long line of *Quests for Glory* before it. Even if it is, it still retains the characters and storyline which have served it so well to date. –*Cindy Yans*



Practicing combat skills is the only way to improve them

Keeping his distance from the guards

A merchant and his wares



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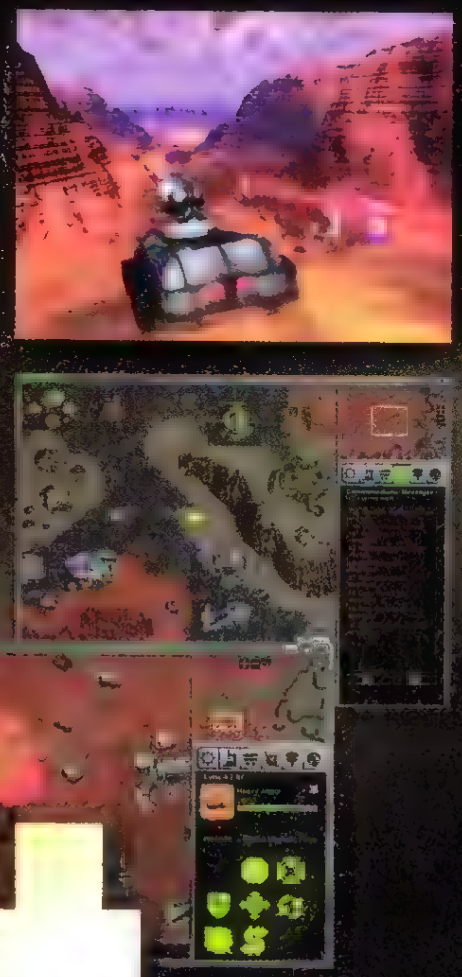
Far Out



survival is a trip...

Populous
The Third Coming
The return of the god game

Bullfrog • Dos, Windows 95

Quick, what's the earliest real-time strategy game you can think of? If you said *Command & Conquer*, either you're new to all this computer gaming stuff or your brain needs a little more RAM. If you said *Warcraft*, give yourself a C for effort. If you said *Dune 2*, close, but no cigar. The great grandfather of this overpopulated genre is the ten year old *Populous*, the game that put Bullfrog on the map while *Magic Carpet* was still just a twinkle in their eyes. Its sequel even featured multiplayer modem games back when 14.4s were cutting edge. Now that everybody and their uncle has thrown their two cents into the genre, Bullfrog is giving this seminal game another incarnation with *Populous: The Third Coming*

Another one?

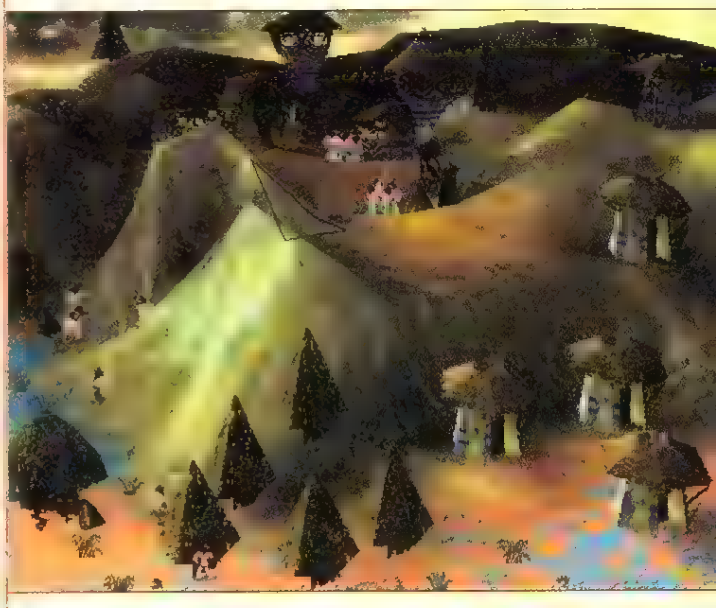
But isn't there a danger of this title getting lost in the onslaught of real-time strategy games? "The market is very competitive," said Brian Allen, a representative for Bullfrog, "but it doesn't scare us because [real-time strategy] is the hottest genre right now. Also, we found out that *Populous* has a solid following; a lot of people still remember *Populous*, which gives us a lot of confidence. Plus, *Populous: The Third Coming* has technology never seen before, which differentiates it from the competition. And the gameplay will differentiate us, as well as the concept of the god game."

The term "god game" has fallen by the wayside in favor of "real-time strategy," but it was *Populous* that inspired the original term. The player assumed the role of a god, viewing his people from an isometric overhead view. You moved around a little ankh to attract your people, leading them into battle or unsettled lands. There was the occasional miracle (generally a catastrophe visited on the enemy), but you were otherwise limited to patting down land so your people could build houses and reproduce. You were essentially a voyeur with a bulldozer. The newer games in the genre gave the player direct control over his units, abandoning the deistic model for a more hands-on approach. War replaced religion as the milieu: rather than a player's followers going forth and multiplying, they went forth and kicked some ass. The emphasis on combat sans the traditional turn-based gameplay gave rise to the phrase "real-time strategy," which was more accurate than "god game."

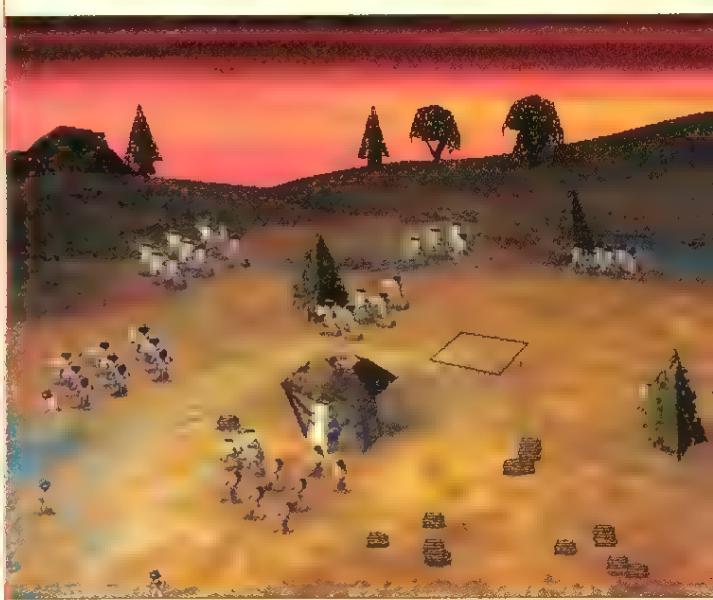
Gimme that ol' time god game!

Populous: The Third Coming will restore some of those elements that have been abandoned. For starters, the resource model eschews the hackneyed money, gold, or ore, using instead mana, which comes from the people who worship you. These people will start out as wild men, scampering about drinking from pools and plucking berries out of trees. Onto the scene comes the shaman, the player's main follower, who barks out incantations that sound like something half way between baby talk and speaking in tongues. One of the commands available to her (yes, she's a woman) is Convert, which will attract nearby wild men and make them your followers; their little gray loincloths change color to reflect their allegiance. The more followers you amass, the faster you generate mana. One of the twists is that your shaman uses mana when she converts: you gotta spend mana to make mana. Another twist is that when followers are killed, their little ghosts ascend to heaven and they're quickly reincarnated as neutral wild men, ripe for conversion all over again. Death is appar-

Nothing like a meteor storm to ruin a nice day

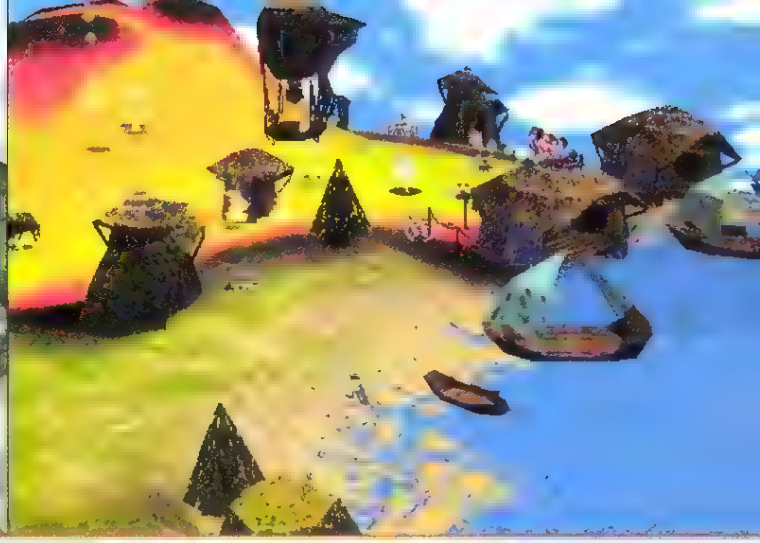


Different worlds will have different terrain sets and different lighting conditions



Building structures used to be up to your followers; the structures in Populous: The Third Coming are now built at your command

The Faithful Adherents of Blue forcibly convert the Holy Followers of Green



You can see here the ghost of a follower heaven-bound. He'll be back shortly, wearing a gray loincloth

ently not a permanent condition in the world of *Populous* (when the shaman dies, she too is reincarnated, but only after the player loses a healthy chunk of his mana).

The other use for mana is miracles. Natural disasters are the player's main offensive arsenal; this is another element worthy of the term "god game." Swamps, Earthquakes, Lightning, Tornadoes, Meteor Storms, and Volcanoes will all be fondly remembered by *Populous* veterans. The game-winning floods of the earlier versions (just build all your settlements two tiers above sea level, then use a flood to increase the water level by one tier and drown all your opponents) have been scaled back to Lakes, which can be crossed with Land Bridges. New miracles include the Angel of Death, the plague, and ghost armies. The bulldozing that was such a significant part of the earlier games is now left up to your followers, who will flatten land as needed when assigned to build.

Another godly aspect of the game is the emphasis on conversion and preaching. While killing your enemies' followers is an important part of the game, winning them over to your side where they'll contribute to your mana pool is far more important. Converted wild men can become preachers, who will cause all enemies to sit down and listen to their sermonizing. The members of a preacher's audience won't respond to their god's commands. Once they've heard the Word, there's a chance they'll convert. Preachers can only be attacked by other preachers, so they have a defensive and offensive function.

According to dogma

But there are some new elements in the game that reek of "me too"-ism: other successful real-time strategy games have included certain features, so it seems any new game in the genre has to have the same features. In *Populous 1* and *2*, followers tended to merrily go about their own way, building homes and wandering about blissfully. They would occasionally skirmish with heathens or follow knights on crusades, but overall they were independent creatures doing their own thing. *The Third Coming* allows the player to control each follower like an automaton, opening up the game to micromanagement. This wargaming element is typical of real time strategy games, but it's completely new to the paradigm of "god games" that *Populous* established. Commands include specific movement and attack orders, patrol routes, wood harvesting for buildings, wood stockpiling, entering and leaving buildings, and boarding and exiting vehicles, as well as some specific commands for certain character types.

Other concessions to the recent real-time strategy conventions are unit upgrades and buildings. The game features different building types, all of which take time to build as your followers go to work gathering wood and building the assigned structure. Most buildings will allow one of your followers to change into a more powerful character. Stock the building with enough inhabitants and let the training process run its course; eventually, an upgraded character emerges, ready to do your bidding. The hierarchy of followers begins with the newly converted wild men, who becomes braves. Braves can become warriors or preachers; warriors can become super warriors with flaming fists and ranged attacks. Spies are also available, allowing you to infiltrate the enemy camp and see how many followers he may have hiding in his buildings. Spies can also sabotage your opponent's building efforts. Some buildings can construct ships and balloons that will transport your characters across impassable ter rain. A drum tower will attract wild men from the surrounding area so you won't have to hunt them down to convert them.

Thinking globally

One of *The Third Coming's* most distinctive features is its look. This is one area where the concept of a god game shines through brightly. The worlds are built on a large globe where the terrain wraps around as you'd expect (no corners to hide in). Your view can be zoomed in and out, from a perspective far out in space to a close up planetside view. But even in its tightest zoom, there's still a sense that you're peering down onto a world from high above: you can see the curvature of the earth and the sky behind it. Like a real globe, the terrain spins and rotates at your command (a jump window allows quicker, but less spectacular, view shifts) The intricately drawn terrain, elabo rate morphing effects, and richly lit catastrophes are all legacies of Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet*. Direct 3D support will be used to smooth the textures, speed the graphics, and spruce up the special effects. Different worlds will boast different environments: snow, deserts, tropics, and nighttime worlds, for instance. As with the earlier games, different environments will affect the inhabitants' hardiness and speed.

The player works his way through six levels, each with five worlds, one of which is a bonus hidden world. The shaman is the consistent link from world to world; she amasses new spells and technologies as she visits new worlds. The early game and end game are linear, but the middle levels open out in a branching structures: if one world is too tough, your shaman can back out and work elsewhere, returning to the previous world without losing any progress she made. *Populous: The Third Coming* will support the standard range of multiplayer connections, but at this point only direct and IPX con nections are confirmed in the final product; TCP/IP connections may have to be added after the release. Up to four players can butt heads over a world in a free-for-all melee or in teams using the game's alliance feature.

While this fall and winter will see real-time strategy games as numerous as stars in the sky, it's refreshing to know that at least one game will try to bring the genre forward while reaching back to its roots. If *Populous: The Third Coming* stands out enough to revive the term "god game," it'll be a welcome addition in a sea of clones. *Tom Chick*

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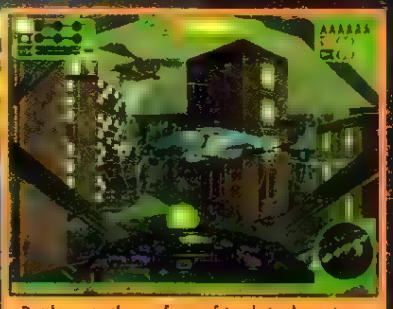

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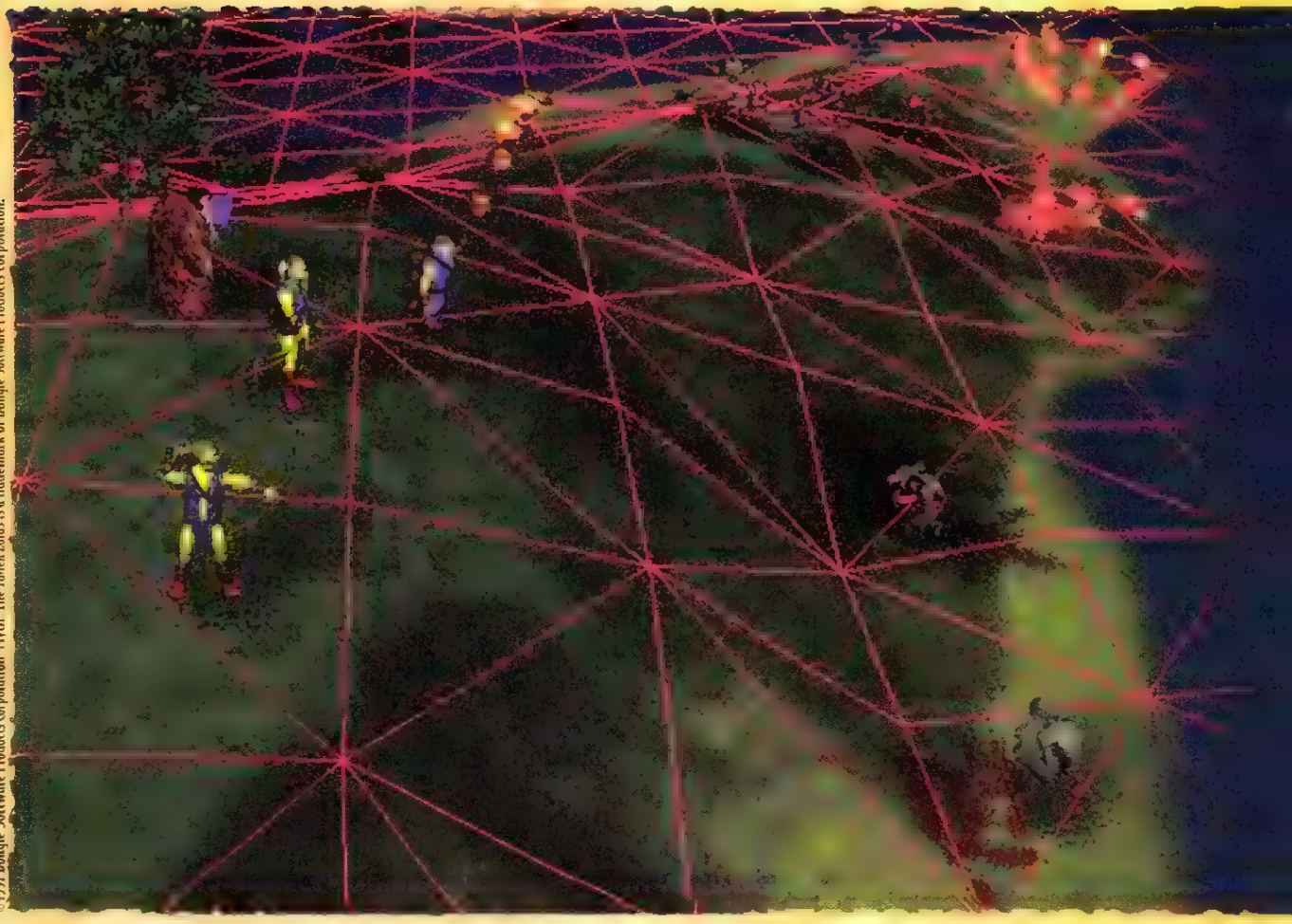
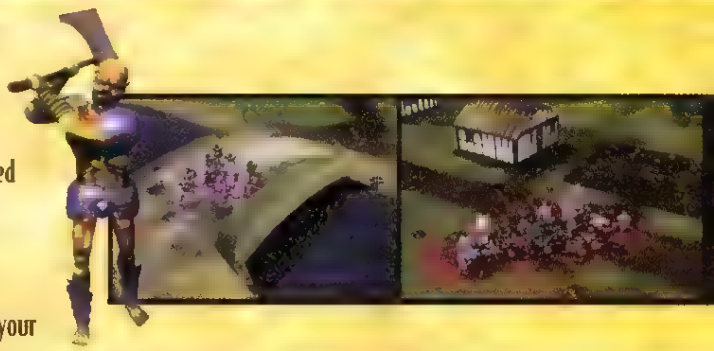


© 1997 Bungie Software Products Corporation Myth: The Fallen Lords is a trademark of Bungie Software Products Corporation.



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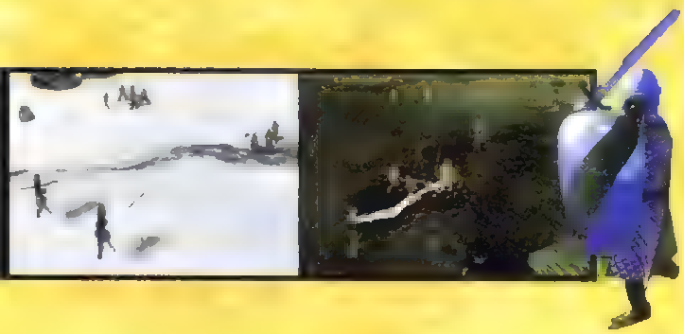

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ANATOMY OF A FLIGHT MODEL

Eric Parker is the MacGuyver of flight sims: MacGuyver would take a piece of gum and a shoelace and put together a crude radio transmitter; Eric Parker, on the other hand, once used a teletype machine and a few algorithms to fashion a rudimentary flight sim. But technology has finally given Parker the tools he needs to makes the sims he wants, which is no mean feat with his high expectations. "On the PC, there isn't any kind of quality in terms of flight model, with very few exceptions," he says. The highest praise he has to offer goes to *Flight Unlimited*, whose flight model he describes as "pretty reasonable."

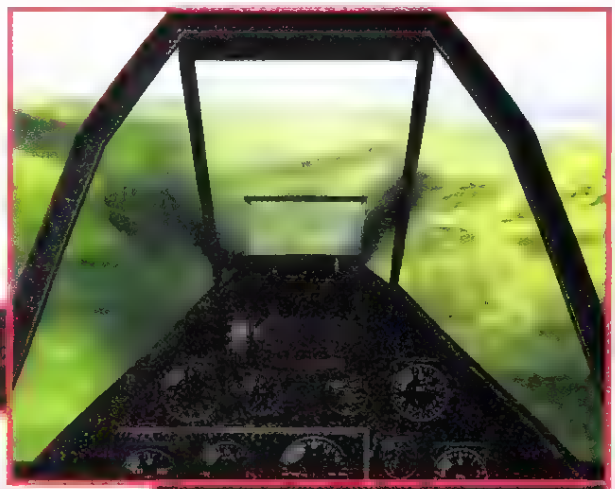
So who is Eric Parker that he can be so critical towards flight sims? For the answer to that question, boot up Activision's *A-10 Cuba!* and take a look at what Parker's company, Parsoft, can do. Although some might describe this sim as a flight model in search of a game, there's something special here. Just taxi down the runway to get a sense for how right it feels; it's all the more impressive once you're airborne.

REINVENTING THE WING

Parker's talents are now focused on *Fighter Squadron: Screamin' Demons over Europe*, a World War II-era sim being published by Activision. His approach to building *Fighter Squadron's* flight model is the sort of revolutionary idea that will either be regarded as ingenious or mad. Most sims use what Parker calls rate-based models to determine an airplane's behavior. An object is tagged as a B-17 or an Me-262 and the database stores rates for various behaviors: at such-and-such a rate of speed, it will stall; at angle of attack *x*, its roll rate will by *y*; at a certain rate of descent, it will crash; and so on. Numbers are plugged into equations in order to get aircraft to match their published performance figures.

But Parker has a different paradigm for *Fighter Squadron*. He wants to put this sort of kludgery aside and instead create a physics-based model where effects such as stalls, roll rates, and damage are naturally generated rather than superimposed onto the model. "We're going to talk about wing surface area, air flow curve, weight, mass distribution, force, torque, not the effects that will fall out." If the physics are right, Parker suggests, the effects will be accurate.

To do this, Parker's airplanes can't just be monolithic objects with pre-scripted behaviors. "You can't build a good model for taxiing around on the ground without a good model for tires," he says, by way of example. So he set out to build *Fighter Squadron's* planes piece by piece. "It's a component-based architecture where we have multiple bits. We just kind of put the airplanes together like Legos glued together with properties that relate one object to another in a defined behavior. We don't actually have code in there that says 'I'm a B-17' or 'I'm an Me 262.' We have engines, airfoils, airframes, tires, gear, guns, fuel cells, all these various components that we just hook together, a collection of independent objects that are communicating with their neighbors."



Pilot's-eye view from a P-51 ▲

SIMREVELL

Ron Dimant, the game's producer, pulls up an image of a P-51 on a rendering machine. Beneath the artwork, a window shows an elaborate tree structure of the various parts, their properties, and their interactions. It looks very much like the digital version of an unbuilt model airplane in a newly-opened box: wings and gear and the halves of a fuselage spread out in bits and pieces, all neatly attached to little branches.

To illustrate how this diagram is used in a physics-based flight model, Dimant mentions torque. As per Newton's Third Law, every action generates an equal and opposite reaction, so a twisting propeller will cause its aircraft to twist slightly in the opposite direction. "The way we're doing it now," says Dimant, "we don't have to calcu-

The coast of England... if you're a returning American or British pilot, a welcome sight. But if you're flying for the Jerries it's time to get especially tense ▼

late the torque reaction of the aircraft. We actually have propellers attached to engines attached to aircraft. We just take all the bits and add them up and the model calculates the torque for us."

"It's more like the real world," Parker says, "The real world is composed of little bits and exactly what happens out there depends on the interactions of those bits. Our sim is reaching that level of complexity." But the real world's level of complexity, with its thousands of variables, is daunting. How closely will the aircraft in this sim duplicate the actual performance of their real world counterparts? As an example, Parker says they found discrepancies between the historical P 38 and their model. They discovered they had built the fuselage a few feet too short, thus throwing off the center of gravity. By shifting a few of the pieces appropriately and taking the revised plane up for a spin, they were then able to match the published performance specifications.

Dimant and Parker have a lot to say about the flexibility of a physics-based model. This sort of engine is open to adding new aircraft by simply putting the appropriate pieces together. Parker brings up the possibility of submarine sims with accurate values for buoyancy or carrier ops that actually model the force of a steam catapult. Dimant jokingly suggests a clock sim: it could track the movement of a pendulum driving an intricate assortment of gears, all under the influence of gravity, friction, inertia, and mass.

THE GAME'S THE THING

Fighter Squadron will feature nine aircraft across three terrain arenas representing the English Channel, Germany, and North Africa. The gameplay will emphasize squadrons in air combat (the Screamin' Demons of the title were a World War II fighter squadron), but each of the three combatants, the U.S., England, and Germany, also has a heavy bomber (well, the game's Ju-88 is the closest thing to a heavy bomber that Germany had in service). Some of the aircraft choices are odd (the Hawker Typhoon and Lancaster), some are expected (P 51, P 38, B-17, and FW-190), and some are welcome changes of pace (the Mosquito and the Me 262.

As is nearly everything else in this sim, the internal views are fully 3D. The plane's movement and gravitational forces will move your viewpoint slightly. Moving surfaces are visible from within the cockpit and you can even see the canopy surfaces shift in relation to the outside of the aircraft as your head moves. The game's easier levels will include an overlay that functions like a HUD so beginning players can fly and fight independent of the instruments. The overlay will also feature an overhead map, a damage status display, and targeting diamonds with IDs superimposed over the other planes. The bombers will allow players to choose between the pilot's seat, the bombardier's seat, or one of the gunner's positions at any time during a mission.

A PHYSICS-BASED MODEL WHERE EFFECTS ARE NATURALLY GENERATED RATHER THAN SUPERIMPOSED

On the surface, *Fighter Squadron's* 30 canned missions may seem like a repeat of the disappointing 12 mission limit that hurt *A-10 Cuba's* replayability. But each mission will have different objectives in different parts of the arena for different squadrons. A player's career will skip around these missions depending on which of the 30 squadrons he's chosen. Also, a thorough mission builder will open the game for user designed scenarios. Computer controlled airplanes have their AI set within the mission builder, where five values are set for each pilot: skill, morale, loyalty, aggression, and sanity. "When the A. needs to make a decision, it queries these values and uses them as weights in the decision making process," Parker explains.

Fighter Squadron's theatres are 40 x 40 square mile arenas of representative terrain with small clusters of buildings for cities. A real world deep penetration would have taken over five hours," says Dimant, "We want the action to happen within two or three minutes of taking off. So we took the terrains and shrunk them a bit, by a factor of about five times." There's a long list of objects present, including POW camps, V-2 sites, sub pens, hydroelectric dams, castles, radar sites, and fortified gun emplacements for the mountains in North Africa's "Malta" island. These arenas and their aircraft will be drawn with native support for 3D chipsets, but detail options, a choice of resolutions, software support for bilinear filtering and z buffering, and an optional haze effect should ease the burden on machines without accelerator cards.

Each nation you can fly for sports one "heavy," complete with multiple crew positions.

"The philosophy from the ground up," says Dimant, "was that this is a network game with zero to eight networked players: it could be just you playing the game or it could be with other people. We didn't want a huge difference between playing the game in a networked environment and a non-networked environment. We wanted it to be possible to play any mission and have another human pilot fly with you." Networked games, however, have different modes to allow for downed pilots to regenerate back at base or take over AI planes. Up to eight players can divide themselves however they like in a mission, in teams or as opponents, with AI or human wingmen. The set up should work similar to *X Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, all the way down to the peer to peer connections. The main difference, if Parker's model works as he hopes, is that there will be nary a hint of sci-fi in the game. Hard-core flight simmers will have a chance to poke and prod at it to see for themselves when *Fighter Squadron* is released this fall. -*Tom Chick*

No, this isn't a cut scene.

The virtual cockpits are now in high-res ▶

European Air War

Flights of fighter fancy

Situated between the bare-bones flight 'n' fight of World War I air combat and the hyper-complexity of modern jet sims are those games that replicate combat in the skies of the last "good war," World War II (well, not counting Desert Storm, which from a gaming stand point is pretty bad). A favorite genre since the early days of computer games, things have been pretty quiet lately, with only online-centric games like *Warbirds* and *Air Warrior 2.0* providing fresh looks at piston-driven fury. Things, as they say, are a-changin'; we can expect a crop of new WW II flight sims, lead off by the much-anticipated *Pacific Air War* sequel, *European Air War*.

Gamers will find a lot that's familiar in *European Air War*; it retains the "good" things from *Pacific Air War* - like the virtual cockpit – while improving on them (the virtual cockpit, for example, can now be viewed in high resolution) and adding plenty of new features. Gamplay revolves around quick start play (jump in and start shooting), single missions (plenty of adjustable parameters), and career modes. Originally titled *1943 European Air War*, the *1943* was dropped because, in addition to the main career campaign (from April '43 to April '45), players can now experience the famous Battle of Britain in a mini-career. Eight player Multiplayer (either cooperative or competitive) expands gaming options even further.

Where *Pacific Air War* was largely "you against the world," *European Air War* takes the much more realistic team approach. Early in your career you might just have a wingman (or *be* a wingman), but eventually you'll get promoted to higher and higher levels of command, ultimately attaining group commander status and controlling several squadrons. The career is now dynamic, with a variety of missions including V-1 hunting, fighter sweeps, escorts, or even ground attacks against moving targets (watch out for those armed trains). On the Allied side you have the option of retiring a favorite pilot after a year (the Germans had no such luck), and there are some other career surprises as well.

The detailing and textures on the planes are extensive, but at the time we saw the game the control surfaces didn't visibly move ▶

A P-51 over Europe; note that some of the terrain relief has been exaggerated ▼

In addition to a dynamic career, the individual missions should sport more randomness. For example, you can't expect X number of encounters in each fighter sweep; instead, you may get one or you may get four – the uncertainty will add to your worries (expend the ammo to get the fleeing fighter, or pass on him in case you get jumped again?). A morale factor has been added; your whole group will flee a furball when morale drops to a certain point, and individuals will attempt to leave when damage reaches 30% or higher.

The theatre you'll fly in covers much of Western Europe: France, Germany, the Lowlands, and portions of England. While the world model is fairly close to the actual terrain, some relief has been added (the areas modeled are actually quite flat) because gamer feedback demanded plenty of hills and valleys.

As the war goes on (and your career progresses) you may get the chance to upgrade to newer and better planes. A game purely for fans of fighter flight, *European Air War* offers some twenty flyable fighter variants: P-38H & J, P-47C & D, and P-51B & D for the Americans; Hurricane, Spitfire Ia, IX, & XIV, Typhoon Ib, and Tempest V for the British; and Me109E3, G6, & K4, Me110C & G, FW190A8 & D9, and Me262a for the Germans. Non-flyable craft you may encounter in the game include the B-17, B-24, and B-26 for the Americans; the Mosquito for the British, and the Ju 87, Ju 88A & C, He111, Me410a, and V-1 "Buzz Bomb" for the Germans. MicroProse says the flight modeling on the aircraft is as close as they can get it.

Technology has improved quite a bit since the days of *Pacific Air War* (one of the reasons this sequel is so late – technology has moved faster than development). The game will include support for force-feedback joysticks and 3Dfx and Rendition 3D accelerator cards. Graphics modeling is much improved over the older game (and even early versions of *EAW*), but low-end owners fear not – MicroProse says that the game can run (with resolution and detail settings at their lowest) on a 486/66.

A long time in coming, MicroProse believes that *European Air War* will reward gamers' patience. The air raid siren should be sounding in time for the holidays. *–Scott Udell*

European Air War • MicroProse • Windows 95

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A normal shot from the 3Dfx version. Note the floor reflections – obviously, this is the shiniest floor in existence

NBA Live 98

No longer faking the funk on a nasty dunk

There's never been any question that EA Sports' *NBA Live* series of basketball games are the best on the market. However, they've always had a number of niggling gameplay problems that kept them from being transcendent game experiences, and the incredible improvements in its visuals over the years made those flaws stand out even more.

After playing with an alpha version of *NBA Live 98*, it's immediately clear the designers have listened to the critics and are addressing some of the faults, from a computer that can (finally) intelligently substitute players to a referee that actually calls illegal defense. The latter fix eliminates the time-tested strategy of double-teaming the best scorer when he doesn't have the ball. Also, with the game set to simulation and on the easiest skill level, scores are considerably lower (25-40 points per 12 minute quarter).

▲ This creepy graphic shows the face textures that are mapped on the polygonal figures. Say hello to Luc Longley

◀ A replay of the Lakers' Elden Campbell driving to the hoop in the non-3Dfx version

▼ Sir Charles leaps for a rebound

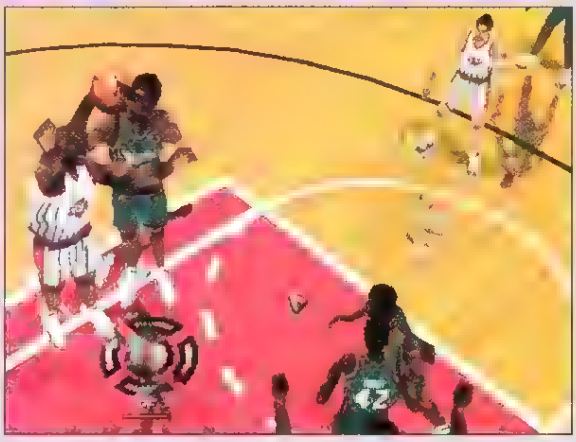
The game gives you five different play modes, most carryovers from previous games, including the usual exhibition, playoff and full-season games. New to *NBA Live 98* is a three-point shoot out, multiplayer play for up to eight players (via Internet, network, modem or serial) and a full draft, where you can select the players for your team and build your own leagues. Career play still isn't implemented, but this is a step in the right direction.

The game now has full support for multi-button gamepads (and auto-detects them), offering functionality for all nine buttons on the Gravis Gamepad Pro and the Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad. The extra buttons allow you to do custom moves such as cross-over dribbles, spin-moves, head-down drives to the basket and high-flying dunks without forcing you to master obscure combos. On defense, there are individual buttons for arm-checks and steals. All in all, the control feels a lot better than *NBA Live 97*, with less of the momentum that many gamers complained about in that version.

EA Sports had done an superb job making the game look like an "NBA on TNT" television production, from the color commentary from Ernie Johnson, Jr. and play-by-play by Verne Lundquist to the score overlays during the game that use the TNT typeface and graphic design. A new menu interface ditches last years ugly graffiti look for a slicker and more streamlined approach, though the players they got for the background graphics, Mitch Richmond, Joe Dumars, Larry Johnson, Tim Hardaway and Christian Laettner all look bored.

Features that are carryovers from previous versions of the game include the full NBA license (minus Michael Jordan, but Charles Barkley is back in the game), 3D graphics with custom court layouts for each stadium, incredibly realistic polygonal character graphics and multiple camera angles for viewing the action. New to the series is support for the 3Dfx 3D accelerator card, which improves the frame-rate on lower-end machines and provides a serious visual kick for everyone. Overall, even in alpha form, the unaccelerated frame-rate seems considerably higher than in previous games.

The polygonal characters are greatly improved over previous games as well, with even more definition in the face textures. There are over 350 identifiable players who've had their photographs mapped onto the polygonal figures in the game (minus Jordan, of course, who appears with an alien head and as "Roster Player" number 99 in this version of the game). The overall effect is downright creepy, with some players smiling as they run down the court, and others scowling. Fans will enjoy picking out their favorite players, while others will merely stand gape-jawed at how much the game looks like the real thing.



Overall, *NBA Live 98* looks to have refined the gameplay and again raised the visual standard for sports games. *–Steve Bauman*

NBA Live 98 • EA Sports • Windows 95

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Lords of Magic

Lord it over your opponents

Sierra's *Lord of the Realm II* is a bit of an oddity in the world of non-wargame strategy games; unlike almost all the rest (*SimCity* and its ilk excepted), it has a basis – albeit a very loose basis – in history. The realm you try to build up is something like a medieval kingdom, with no wizards, orcs, or other fantasy trappings. A large number of gamers, however, wanted either *more* realism (the minority) or less (the majority, shouting "Give us magic! Give us creatures! Give us fantasy!). Guess who won out for the next game in the series?

Set in a fairly typical fantasy universe, *Lords of Magic* posits a land threatened by evil forces in the form of the UPE (Ultimate Personification of Evil), Lord Balkoth. It is, of course, your job to save the world… unless you're playing Balkoth, in which case it's your job to conquer the world. The game features eight races, each corresponding (roughly) to a particular magic type and each having an affinity to specific terrain. Each race has a polar opposite, so, for example, good elves will find their particular nemesis in the dark elves. In addition to choosing your race you choose the class of leader you wish to be: fighter, wizard, or thief. Different specialties lend different strengths and weaknesses in the game, and will effect how others relate to you in the game. You are indeed "in the game"; unlike most strategy games, your character can be killed, and it'll be game over – unless, of course, you have heirs to continue your line.

A city in the air ▶

The lands of light and life ▼

Not just a combat game and not just a resource manager, *Lords of Magic*, like *Lords of the Realm II*, combines both aspects. At the strategic level you have to explore the world around you, growing your web of power as you uncover new realms. While gold is one of the coins of your empire, your royal power or status is even more important. Wise use and application of accumulated power is critical to success; internally it helps you keep the people happy (or at least controlled), and externally it helps smooth the way for successful diplomacy and trade.

Sierra claims that diplomacy and trade are both detailed and important parts of the game, and that both will work in multiplayer and single player games (in other words, you'll be able to conduct detailed negotiations with AI players, something most games of this nature have lacked). While neither diplomacy nor trade modules were in the version we saw, the claims are impressive: negotiate to trade goods, forces, cities, or even heirs, or offer to loan an allied player a city for a time, then get it back. The mechanics of this are unclear, but if they pull it off it will be a coup indeed.

Impressive AI claims encompass not only your opponents, but your own forces as well. Sierra says you can take your one of your champions and assign him or her to go off, establish a city, mine gold, produce forces, and send them to you at the front… all automatically. If you wish to do the micromanagement yourself, Glenn Oliver, the game's producer, is quick to assure that you still can, but for harried leaders with large empires it's nice to know you'll have smart underlings to fall back on.

While all strategic actions take place in turns, tactical encounters occur in real time. Zoomed in from the strategic map, they show the actual terrain (not generic representations), so any changes that happen to the terrain (there's some *really* powerful magic available) will show up even at the low level. Parties will generally be small (not dozens of unit), so these encounters – which can occur in open terrain or in underground caves – go quickly.

Whereas *Realms* had no fantasy, *Magic* has lots: some 80 different fantastical creature types (dragons, dwarves, skeletons, giants, etc.) and about 160 spell types should satisfy even the hard-core thaumaturge. Multiplayer – either cooperative or competitive – is a big component in Sierra's plans (up to six of the eight sides can be played by humans), with play available over modem, LAN, or battle.net, and Sierra says some form of editor will probably ship with the game.

An ambitious design, we've only touched on a portion of the its features; whether these and more actually make it into the game remains to be seen, but if they do, fantasy gamers could have quite an experience on their hands. –*Scott Udell*

Lords of Magic • Sierra • Windows 95

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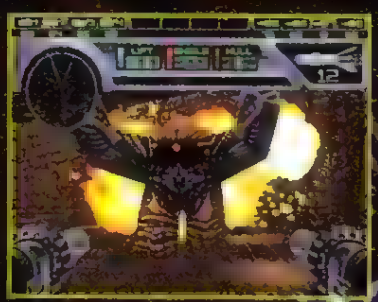

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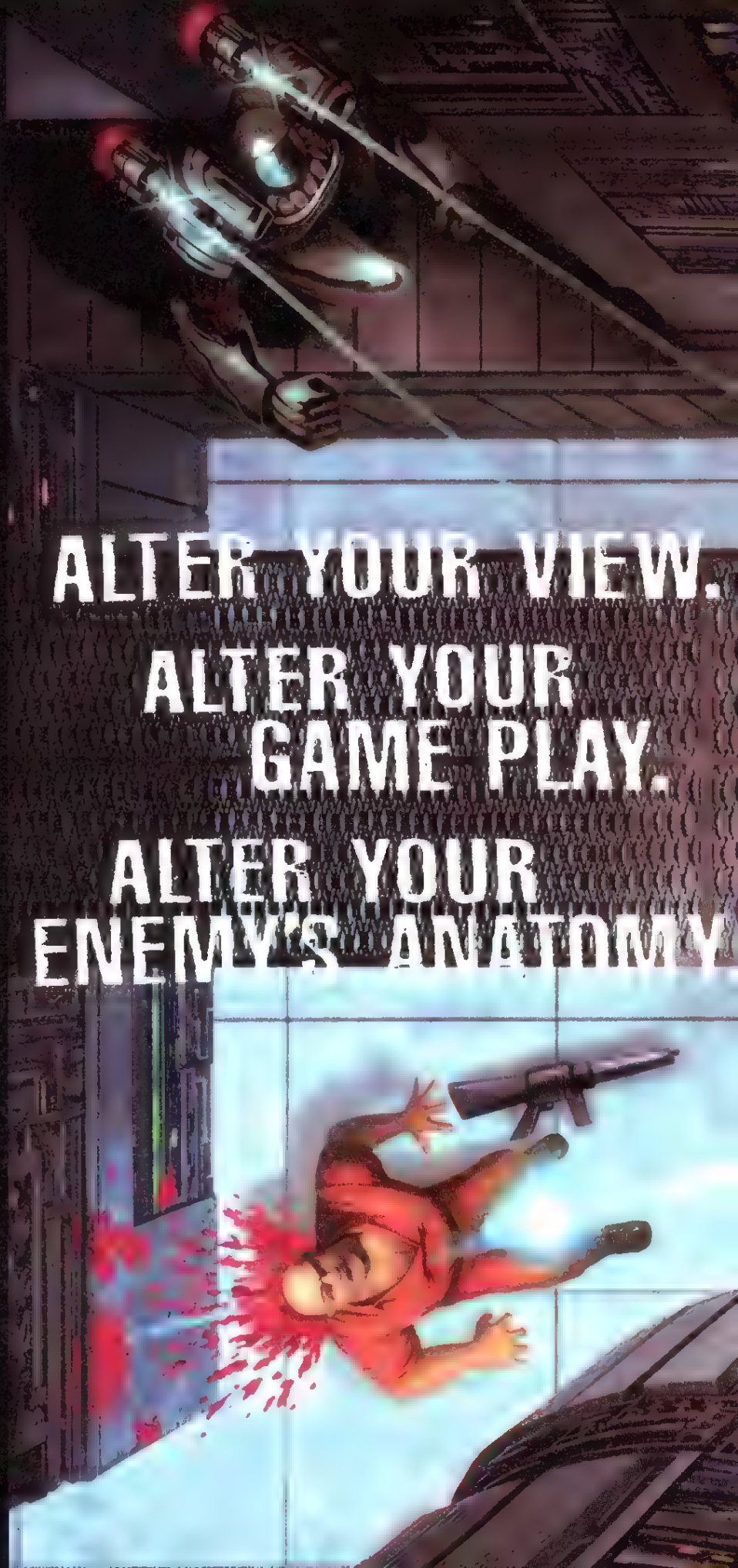

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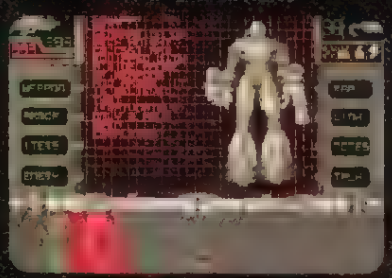

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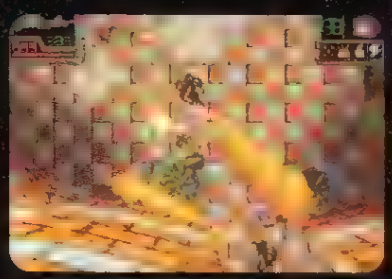

30 non-linear territories to set path; explore ahead before completing previous levels.

RAVEN

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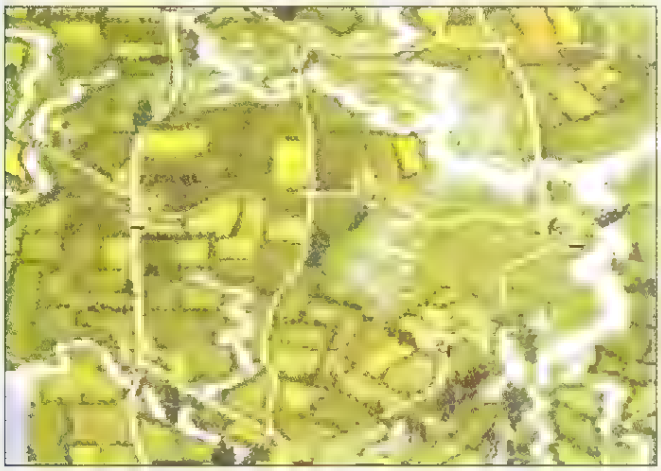
Panzer General II

A new face to an old favorite

One of the German campaigns starts in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War; while the visuals are much improved, the core gameplay remains the same ▶

Like it or not, there's no denying that *Panzer General* is one of the most – if not the most – popular computer wargames of all time. It was certainly the first wargame to bring new gamers to the genre in quantity, and its simple but fast-paced gameplay was something rarely if ever seen in wargaming. From that game came an entire series known officially as the *Five Star Series* and unofficially referred to as the *General* games. The series, which includes four more games (two World War II, one fantasy, and one sci-fi) varied in quality, but no single game had the impact of the original *Panzer General*. Perhaps recognizing this, SSI is revisiting the ground covered by the "classic" in *Panzer General II*, the first game in a new *Living Battlefield Series*.

Wargames are often known as the plain Janes of the gaming world; the hard-core wargamers claim to not want snazzy graphics and animated flash. Knowing the broader gaming market, however, SSI is pumping up the visuals of *Panzer General II* quite a bit, something that becomes obvious as soon as you start up a scenario. The maps now look like aerial shots with a bit of an angle on them; despite the hex-based game grid, the underlying look is smooth and continuous, without the tiled look of the game's predecessor. Units, too, have been improved, especially vehicles (the graphics are taken from scans of GHQ miniatures, something that gives more detail and is much cheaper than 3D rendering). Despite the perspective appearance to the visuals, this is still an overhead game; it plays out much like the original, complete with the shaded movement areas. The user interface is slicker but not radically different, so anyone who's played games in the first series should jump in with no trouble.



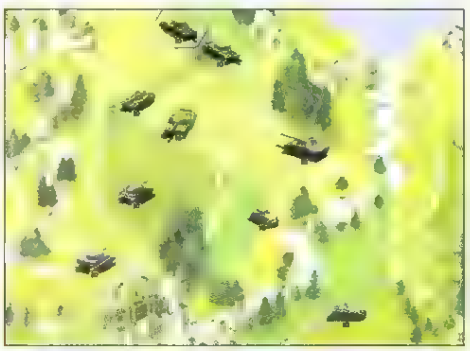
▲ The strategic map for the Advance on St. Lo scenario

The bocage around Caen ▶

While the first game had you campaigning only from the German perspective, *Panzer General II* lets you tackle four campaigns from multiple view points: "Blitzkrieg" and "Defending the Reich" as the Germans, "Crusade in Europe" as either the Americans or the British, and "On to Berlin" as the Soviets. As before, campaigns have a blend of historical and alternate history scenarios; Blitzkrieg, for example, starts with the Spanish Civil War and may end with an assault on the Project Manhattan facilities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee (facing, amongst others, "Bob Dole's 10th Mountain Division"). According to the draft manual, the campaigns include 35 scenarios, and the beta we looked at has 49 separate scenarios, playable from either side (some of the Western Europe scenarios come in British and American flavors).

Once through the canned scenarios, the *Panzer General* player had little left to do, but with *Panzer General II*'s built-in battle editor you can extend replay value some by editing scenario and unit information (but not terrain – recall that the maps are hand-crafted). Online scenarios for two to four players, played via LAN or the Internet, are included (and designed specifically for multiplayer), or you can battle another opponent via play-by-e-mail.

Much of the actual gameplay is similar if not identical to the original series. You'll again have a core force that you'll carry (hopefully) through a campaign, augmented each scenario by auxiliary units you have to choose and deploy based on the battle to come and your personal preferences. The scale of the game is somewhat lower than it was in *Panzer General*, and is fixed (in the original the scale shifted somewhat arbitrarily). With this lower-level scale, some units have gotten ranged fire capabilities that let them attack targets more than a hex away; however, unlike artillery and air attacks, the fire from these units is line-of sight and can be blocked by terrain. Units that perform exceptionally well during a campaign may generate a leader; leaders each have two special abilities – one related to the unit's class and one random – that improve that unit's performance.



By mixing the simple, fast gameplay of the original with improved game technology and a broader scope, SSI hopes to start a furor at least equal to that of the original. Achieving such a splash is tough, especially for a sequel; nevertheless, *Panzer General II* stands ready to enter Christmas game campaign season. *–Scott Udell*

Panzer General II • SSI • Windows 95

WHERE THE CYBERDIVERSION INSTITUTE STANDS ON THE HEAT.NET 5-POINT PLAN.

On August 17, 1997, several members of the CyberDiversion Institute logged on to HEAT.NET. Here's what they found:

POINT #1: Making Internet Gaming Easy.

After trying every internet game network, we found HEAT.NET had the easiest start-up. Log on to HEAT.NET, get the free HEAT software and play free, OR purchase the retail box (includes six months' premium membership) HEAT CD with games and internet access from MCI. HEAT.NET's simplified start-up process will jump start world peace by allowing people to start diverting their aggressive urges away from reality immediately!

POINT #2: Creating The Fastest Internet Gaming Experience.

We found that HEAT.NET delivers the fastest, smoothest gameplay on the net. With the new millennium and the threat of Armageddon looming, the faster every human can purge their evil Reptilian Complex buildup, the better for all of us.

POINT #3: Making HEAT.NET Compatible With Nearly Every Multi-Player PC Game.

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POINT #4: Rewarding Cyber-Aggression With Points And Prizes.

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POINT #5: Creating Competition With Ladders And Events.

The ability to compete against the best players for prizes in automated, secure events and rise to the top creates an environment for Optimum Diversion Release (ODR), or the release of the most aggressive Reptilian urges, and the attainment of individual peace — which we believe will lead to a greater world peace!

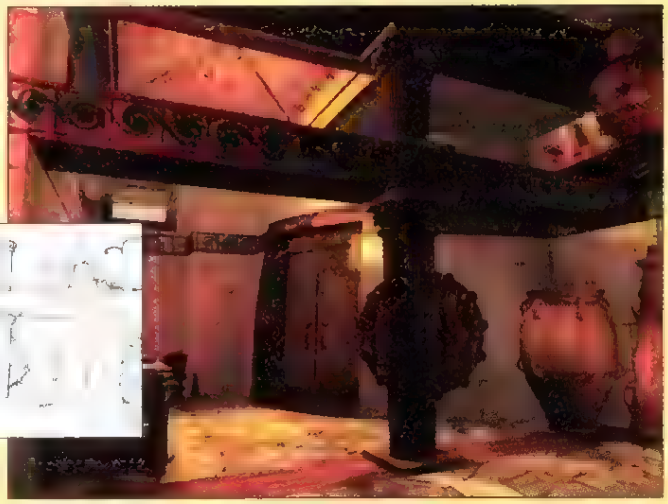
Therefore, we, the CyberDiversion Institute, endorse HEAT.NET for its outstanding contribution in making the world safer for everyone. Please log on to HEAT.NET today and do your part for world peace.

D. G. Bartha

Officially endorsed by Dr. D G Bartha
The CyberDiversion Institute

Journeyman Project 3

Welcome back, Arthur



Concept ▲
and reality ▶

Not satisfied to simply sit back and relax on its prior successes, Presto Studios prepares to bring gamers yet another installment in the *Journeyman Project* series. Entitled *Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time*, this product is different from either of its predecessors.

To start things off, the developers have implemented an improved 3D engine called "Smooth Move." Among other benefits, this new technology offers photo-realistic rendering of every location in the game world, yet allows for 360 degrees of movement in all axes (that'd be three, for you folks out there who skipped Geometry 101 for Advanced Molting 202). Though the game still utilizes a step movement between nodes, the distance between these nodes has been lessened, which should make travel throughout the game world more fluid. This time around, players are whisked to three exotic locales: Atlantis, El Dorado, and Shangri La. Each world is branded a bit differently based on the three time periods presented in the game.

◀ Artists sketches compared to the final images

Ghenghis Khan. Just hope you're not impersonating an enemy during the conversation ▶

To keep the audio in pace with the improved graphics, all of the sound effects will be sampled in 16-bit stereo. Where appropriate, noises will pan based on the player's position with respect to the audio source. For instance, the blood-curdling screams of the sadist cricket to your left suddenly pan to the right as you turn to face the opposite direction.

In answer to players' cries for companionship, interaction with other celestial entities will not only be included, it'll be integral to successfully completing the adventure. Not only that, but over 22 hours worth of film (weaned down to 35 minutes) were shot for use as intermittent cut scenes throughout the tale.

Introduced for the very first time is a chameleon suit. Players don this suit throughout the journey, using it to morph into the image of other characters. Offering a unique twist on the identity cliché prevalent in movies, players can wean additional (or less) information based on who they're impersonating at the time. Pretend to be a certain character's sister, for example, and he just might divulge the details of his freelance work as an Avon lady. Impersonate a police officer, and the otherwise sociable hoodlums won't even tip their hats to you.

A distinguishing trademark in the *Journeyman Project* series has always been the presentation of an engrossing story, and Executive Producer Michel Kripalani remains adamant about keeping that tradition firmly intact. "In your search for Agent 3," he states, "you discover that three ancient Earth civilizations have been destroyed by Aliens. Traveling to each of the time zones prior to their destruction, you discover not only the reason for their destruction, but also clues that allow you to solve a crisis in the present."

In starting this project, the developers first compiled a list of ten common gripes, both about their game and other adventure titles. From interface issues and speed concerns, to lacking interactivity and the strange absence of a protagonist made entirely of beauty bark and caramel (okay, that was number eleven, and they ignored it), every point has been fully addressed in *Legacy of Time*. Thanks to a veteran crew who've worked together since 1991, the primary focus shifted from technical issues to refining the actual game play and story flow. As a result, expect the game to begin with simplistic puzzles for setting the stage, then slowly crescendo into more intricate and complex dilemmas to solve. Then, as Kripalani states, "Like a great novel, the game should culminate in a satisfying conclusion."

Fans of the series may recall the loss of Arthur, your lone robot companion (acting as a cleverly disguised on-line hint system) at the end of *Buried in Time*. Thanks to a deluge of letters and pleading e-mails, Arthur is back in his beloved role, and better than ever. Now, he not only spouts helpful hints at the appropriate times, he also injects general wit and commentary about your travels. To obtain the voice of Arthur, numerous hours of audio were recorded by Matt Weinhold, a local comedian in the Bay area. The intent is to mold Arthur into the incarnation of a light-hearted interlude in an otherwise serious game.

With experience, devotion, and Arthur in its corner, *Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time* shouldn't disappoint its fans – past, present or soon-to-become. *–Tim Royal*

Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time • Red Orb Entertainment • Windows 95

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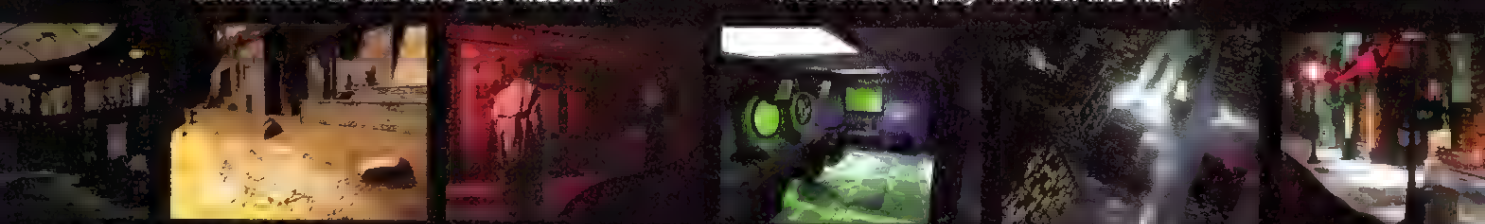

Actual game screen shots

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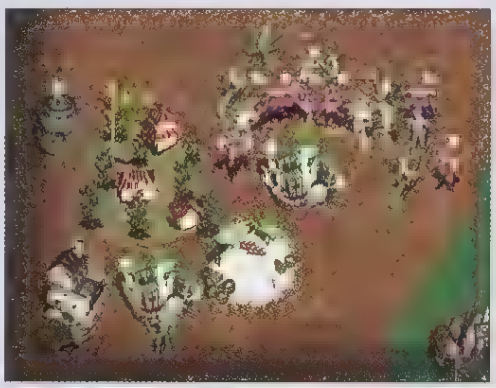
Seven Kingdoms

Be King for a day

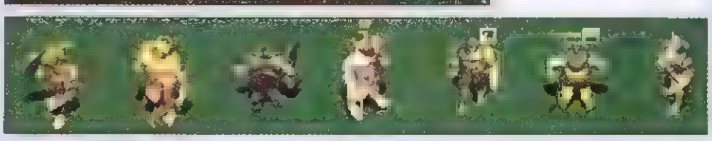
"Stormy weather..."

While you may not know the name Trevor Chan, you've probably at least heard of his game *Capitalism*, one of the best business sims of recent memory. If you're at all familiar with the game, you would probably agree that it could have been subtitled "Detail," something it had plenty of. With *Capitalism Plus* just released, Trevor's now taking that delightful penchant for detail in a new direction, aiming at the current king of strategy genres – real time strategy – in his newest title, *Seven Kingdoms*.

The idea behind *Seven Kingdoms* is simple: take charge of one of seven quasi-historical kingdoms (Chinese, Greeks, Japanese, Mayan, Norman, Persians, and Vikings) and try conquer the world, battling against up to six computer or human opponents. On the surface it might look like a historically-based *Clone & Conquer* game (or even an *Age of Empires* clone), and indeed the combat element is very reminiscent of other games in the genre (especially *Warcraft*). This facet of the game, however, barely touches on the bulk of the game, a real-time kingdom/civilization sim that contains elements of *Civilization* and *Lords of the Realm* (and, yes, *Command & Conquer*) while tossing in some elements all of its own.



While battle is one way to conquest, it's costly in both people and prestige



The warriors from seven cultures united under one king

You start a session of *Seven Kingdoms* with a typical small town and local castle; from here you have to recruit peasants to fill your army, take on professions (mining, construction, leadership, etc), or even to act as spies. A village won't go far without expansion, so you'll eventually want to build a market (for trade), manufactories (for both trade goods and weapons), a tower of science (for research), and so forth.

So far, sounds like most other games, right? Things get a little different, however, when it comes time to expand your empire. Most games of this style have you wreaking destruction on enemies – you win by wipeout. While you can technically do this in *Seven Kingdoms*, it's a pretty quick road to ostracism (especially if you want to trade with anyone). Instead, you want to try to take over enemy villages by building influence with them. If they have a local sovereign (or a general beholden to such a sovereign), you might take out their castle, then plunk down your own to build your influence over the locals (this is the best approach for neutral villages). Alternatively, you might send in a spy to gain information and sow discord; you may even get your spy hired on as a leader who can work his way up from the inside – if he gets put in charge of a village or even becomes top leader, guess what? You've got yourself a victory without battle (not to mention one mighty surprised opponent). Once you get a village you have to keep the people happy, remembering that they're a new culture (who, incidentally, can provide you with the specialty troops of that culture).

Trade via caravans (if you have a market) and ships (if you have a port linked to a market) will become a necessity for growth and income. You can either trade between your own villages, manufactories, and mines (the last two may or may not be tied with villages) or between friendly, err, enemies (you know what I mean). As in *Capitalism* you can end up with a surprisingly complex trade network: mines to manufactories to markets to other markets or manufactories to... well, you get the picture. Once set up, however, you don't need to worry too much about them and you can use the few displays in the game to help track things.

Combat is fairly simple, with the troops from each of the seven kingdom types gaining different advantages. You can train troops and leaders, and your weapons manufactory will, through research, eventually produce five weapons types (with three levels of capability each): catapults, ballista, cannon, spitfire, or porcupine. Use them to support your armies in conquest or defense.

A touch of the fantastic adds both spice and further detail to the game. Fryhtans' Lairs dotted about the landscape are quiet until bothered; once you assault them they boil out vile and *very* dangerous creatures like a disturbed anthill. Defeat a Fryhtan general and you can get some treasure; defeat all the generals from a Tower and you can take on its King and from him capture a scroll of power. Each culture has its own scrolls, and each culture (and only that culture) can use the scrolls to build Seats of Power with which players can summon the Greater Beings, demigods of extensive and specialized power. The leader whose kingdom spans many cultures and who holds the reins to several of the Greater Beings will be a power indeed.

Yes, *Seven Kingdoms* is real-time, but it certainly seems to have more twists to it than your average tank-rushing click-fest. Battle is important but its not key; instead of tactics you have to concern yourself more with the broad strategic concerns of a king... after all, the title *is Seven Kingdoms*. –*Scott Udell*

Seven Kingdoms • Interactive Magic • Windows 95

INSANE

[3D CAR COMBAT]

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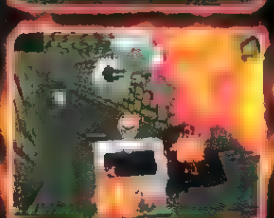

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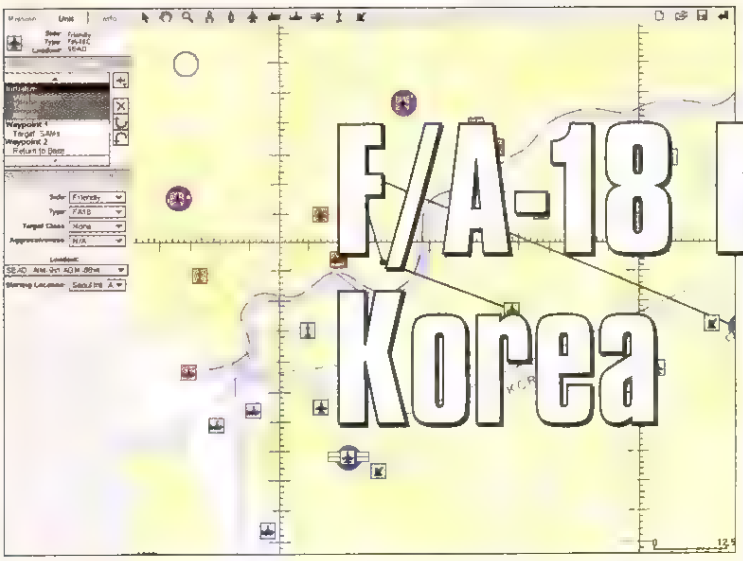
TWISTED METAL 2™



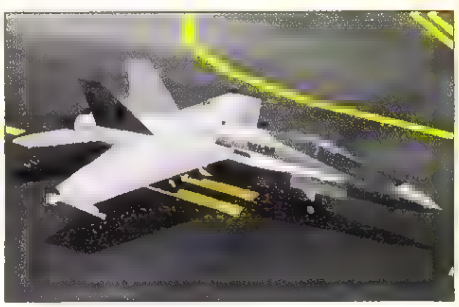
The game sports a much-requested mission editor

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0: Korea

Stinging with a tactical nuke

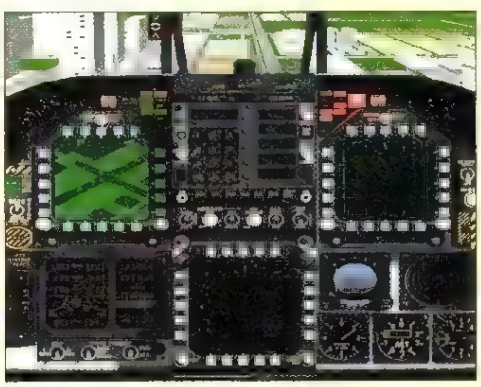
With 3D acceleration and fancy graphics texturing all the rage in the sim world, it's interesting to note that two of the hard-core's most popular sims are still of the polygonal variety. *Su-27* on the PC side and *F/A-18 Hornet* on the Macintosh (and now PC) both show that the polygon-based graphics engine in sims isn't dead, even in these days of inexpensive 3D graphics hardware. The reason, of course, is speed – even running on a high-end machine, few texture-mapped, accelerated titles can match the glassy smooth frame rate of a game with a polygon based engine (especially if there's a realistic flight model also chewing up CPU time). For the hard-core sim fan, accurately recreating the motion and feel of the aircraft being simulated may be more important than the visuals, especially for high-altitude dogfights where ground detail is of little importance.

Perhaps in response to this hard-core market, Graphic Simulation's next game in the *Hornet* series continues this design philosophy, although they have given grudging acknowledgment to the popularity of acceleration by adding 3Dfx support to the PC and (perhaps, if the hardware ships in time) the MacOS versions of the game. Set in one of the potential hotspots of the world, *F/A-18 Hornet 3.0: Korea* is not just a mission disk add-on, but a full title in its own right. To justify this designation, Graphic Simulation's Techical Director, Trey Smith, highlights four major improvements to the package: the flight model, the manual, the graphics, and the mission editor.



Controls galore ▶

An early look at the 3Dfx version of Korea ▼



Hornet 3.0's flight modeling took some hits that Smith claims were later proven incorrect. Even so, while Smith says they were within actual F/A-18 performance parameters before, he says that they have used new information (some supplied by a former F/A-18 pilot they now have on board as a consultant) to bring various elements of the model even closer to nominal. This consultant is also writing their manual, and this time it will be a full game reference instead of just instruction on the plane's avionics – now you'll get thorough instruction on combat and the game interface as well as the plane's systems (although the on-line instructional information will carry over from *Hornet 3.0*).

Despite the emphasis on the polygonal graphics engine, Smith is working on a version for the 3Dfx chipset. This version will add some effects that polygons can't support: smoke and fog, transparencies, and some ground texture, but will also require them to reduce polygon counts on some objects (this may not be as big a hit to visuals as it seems; the flat details on planes and other objects – insignia, text, etc. – are actually polygons, and in the 3Dfx version can be replaced by simple textures). Smith doesn't anticipate any particular performance improvements over their existing engine, however, and it doesn't sound like he will implement any "eye candy" that would actually go contrary to their philosophy of high frame rates.

Perhaps the biggest addition, however, is the inclusion of a mission editor. The basic campaign game consists of 28 generally fixed missions. Graphics Simulations believes that fixed missions give them more flexibility to craft unique types of actions – take out a heavily defended dam with a tactical nuke, meet and escort a defecting enemy pilot, and so on – than they could give the player in a dynamic campaign (Smith says some of the ground targets alone in these custom-crafted missions take a month to build). Recognizing, though, that gamers will want to play more than 28 missions, they've built what is, in essence, a graphical front end to their mission scripting language. This package gives players access to almost all of the same commands their own designers have; some of the specialized branching commands have been left out, and players can't add their own 3D models, but just about everything else is there. Players can even choose to randomize some elements, so mission replayability is extended (and even the designer can play a mission without knowing its exact parameters).

While there are a few other minor tweaks, these four segments are the areas Graphic Simulations points out as the biggest improvements or additions to the *Hornet* series. *Korea* will probably be the last game to use the current engine; once it's done the team plans to dive into development of a whole new system for *Hornet 4.0*. While waiting for that, however, *Hornet* fans will just have to have fun stinging the Glorious Leader with hard iron and tactical nukes. *–Scott Udell*

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0: Korea • Graphic Simulations
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BRUTAL

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IT ACTUALLY TRAVELS AT ABOUT MACH 2
COMING SOON

◀ A look at an early version of the scenario editor. On-screen is a zoomed-out view of one of the D-Day maps; notice the curved railroad tracks – neat trick in a tile-based game

Dogface delight?

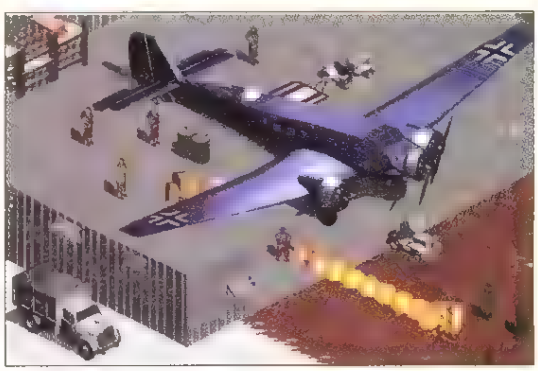
Soldiers of War

Midnight Saturdays, circa 1986, and reruns of the classic TV show *Combat*... black-and-white GIs slogging their way across Europe, led by a taciturn Vic Morrow. Saturday afternoon and TV versions of *Kelley's Heroes*, with a bunch of gold-hungry grunts out on an improbable mission. Hollywood and World War II – mix the two and you have a great basis for a game, no? SSI apparently thinks so, as they're devoting plenty of time, lots of animation, and two CDs worth of data to bring that combo to a computer near you in the upcoming *Soldiers at War*.

The turn based, *X COM* like game places you in the position of a squad leader charged with bringing your eight soldiers safely through the 15 campaign scenarios. Starting in North Africa with a bunch of greenhorns, you'll battle across the desert, into Italy, onto the Normandy beaches, and into the heart of the Third Reich. Aside from the fairly standard infantry actions (from the hedgerow hell of the post-D-Day battles to even nastier city fights in Anzio and Dresden), you and your boys will have to take on some special commando missions (like a raid on a V-2 rocket site). Outside of the campaign will be some 15 individual scenarios; some of these will be historical (or "Hollywood historical") while others will be what-if, alternate fiction events (and some can be played from the German perspective). Up to four players can join (via modem, LAN, or Internet) to play missions from the campaign.

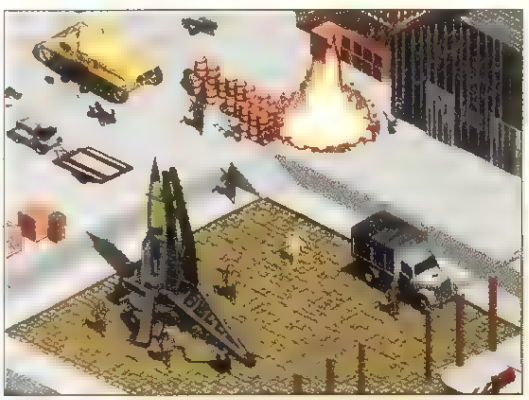
Your squad on a commando raid through a V-2 launch site ▶

Hmm... glad you remembered to pack that flamethrower, eh? The two dice you see behind the plane's right wing indicate a random event in the game; run one of your troopers over it to "trigger" the event, which could be something good (like a spare weapon) or bad (perhaps a hidden explosive) ▼



Beyond that it'll be up to the users to create new missions with the included scenario builder (for which you can use pre-created maps – spare backlot sets? – or design your own from the ground up, down to placing walls on buildings and plopping in tank hulks). Created missions can be either single player or multiplayer, but at this point it sounds like you won't be able to create your own campaigns. Also, the terrain available to you in the mission builder is only Western European/North African – no Pacific Theatre missions (hmm, could there be a mission disk or sequel under consideration?).

Despite the somewhat vague history of the scenarios, SSI isn't sparing any effort in modeling the soldiers themselves. You can either pick a pre-built squad or you can create a squad of eight from a selection of 40 soldiers; choose carefully as their skills and attributes aren't interchangeable and the lack of, say, a demolition expert or a medic may be keenly felt at just the wrong moment. Soldiers will move realistically (they should with over 25 MB of animation per soldier) and can perform some 40 combat actions, from those we've seen in other games of this sort (shoot, run, kneel, throw grenades) to those mostly unique to *Soldiers* (like jumping into disabled tanks to take over their machine guns). The weapons and their effects are also realistic, so don't expect secret ray guns or Thompson machine guns accurate to 1,000 yards – the game may have some Hollywood but not *that* much Hollywood.



If you're familiar with either *X-COM*, *Jagged Alliance*, or, especially, *Wages of War* (to which this game is related), then you've already got a pretty good idea of the style of play in *Soldiers*. You view the battlefield from an isometric perspective, using a box-like "cursor" to direct the actions of your troops. While turn based, the enemy can react to moves your soldiers make, often with fatal results if you're not careful. If you're a cautious player you'll save up action points for each character so they can react (automatically) during the enemy's turn, but if you're the aggressive type you can go charging in and hope that your extravagant expenditure takes out any immediate threats. Like the mercenaries in *Jagged Alliance*, the 40 grunts in *Soldiers* are more than just little animated buckets of statistics. SSI says they'll have some personality and that they'll improve as you work through the campaign; losing one in the waning days of the war should really hurt.

An ambitious title, especially for a company like SSI, *Soldiers at War* is still in its infancy. Due sometime in the first quarter of '98, the game's team plans on a lot of long hours as they bring the game through the boot camp known as development. After that, though, *Soldiers'* "drill instructors" will release it to an even more formidable environment – the game buyer battlefield. It'll be up to gamers to *really* put it through its paces. *–Scott Udell*

Soldiers at War • SSI • Windows 95

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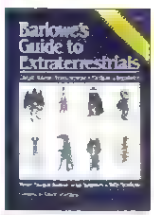

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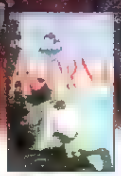

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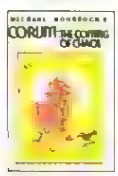

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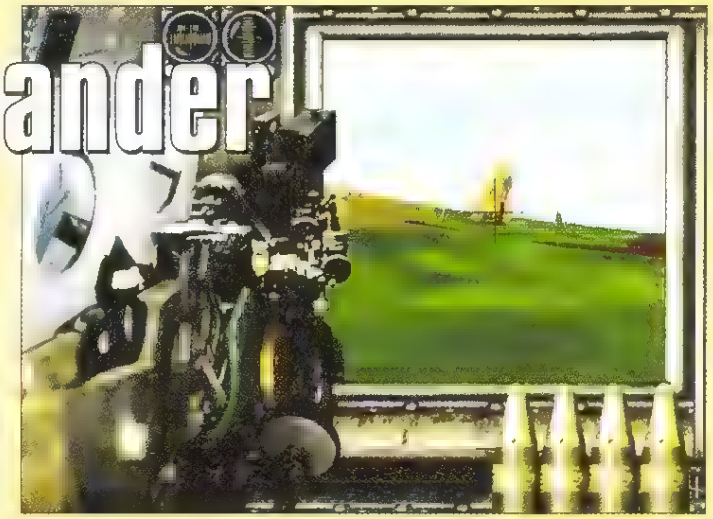
Panzer Commander

"Clank clank" goes the tank



Got 'im! The interior interface screens are developed from actual photographs

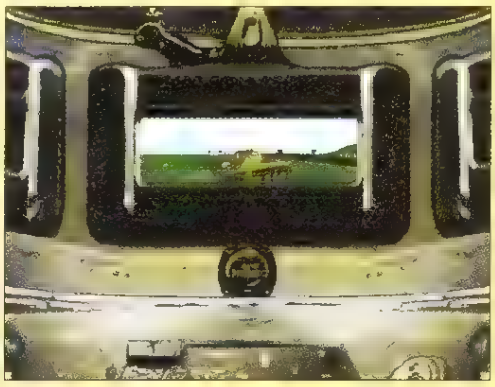
World War II tank simulations (versus wargames) are a lot like the weather; everyone talks about them – wanting them, doing them, saying what should be in them, etc. - but rarely does anyone do anything about them. MicroProse's attempt with *Across the Rhine* seemed to send the genre to its grave… at least until now. First Interactive Magic announced a WW II tank sim based on a reworked version of their *iM1A2* engine, and now SSI is entering the battlefield with *Panzer Commander*

In the game you'll take on the role of either an Axis or Allied (Soviet, American, or British) tanker fighting a number of scenarios or (from either the Soviet or German perspective) through campaigns. Upon starting a campaign you'll get to join one of several famous historical units (like the German *Grossdeutschland* division or the Soviet 5th Guards Tank Corps); your choice of unit affects the vehicles you'll receive and the locations you'll fight in. In each campaign you'll fight two to six scenarios (spanning days or weeks) in a particular area of operations; survive that and you'll move to the next area. SSI's Rick Martinez says he'll be very surprised if any gamer can last the entire war with the realism set on full. While you'll start by commanding just one tank, your success on the battlefield will eventually lead to command over a larger number of computer-controlled vehicles. Even after working through the campaigns you can continue your battles via the included scenario editor and in multiplayer action (SSI lists Appletalk as one of the supported protocols but won't confirm plans for a Macintosh version; they say its currently a PC title).

In tank sims, unlike air combat games, you're up close and personal with the ground, so the stronger your visuals (especially object counts) the better your sim. SSI knows this, and plans on strong graphics to improve both the sim aspects and to give the game plenty of eye candy. They use the appropriate graphics buzzwords – texture mapping, directional lighting, fog effects, 3D hardware acceleration, and so on – but the proof will be in the effect they can achieve. While still fairly early in development (SSI says the game will ship sometime in the middle of 1998), they can already showcase some of the visual technology. In the early version that we looked at the tanks showed articulation and movement characteristics beyond earlier games – for example, road wheels move independently and the tank rocks on its suspension when firing. SSI claims that vehicles and objects in the final game will even show specific damage, a graphic effect that goes beyond the mere visual and adds to the simulation.

While you play a tanker, even the most tank-intensive battles of the war were actually combined-arms affairs to one degree or another, and *Panzer Commander* will reflect this. Planned for inclusion in the final game are infantry (motorized and mechanized) units, commandos, and mine sweepers (amongst others); listed as objects in the development version's directories are vehicles like tank hunters and armored cars, infantry emplacements (those machine gun emplacements might not hurt you, but they can sure chew up your supporting infantry)… oh, and tanks – lots of tanks.

In a departure from the standard in tank sims you'll be able to drive *many* different tanks; Martinez estimates they'll have four to six driveable vehicles for each major power (and this doesn't include the variants). Each tank features several positions you can play from: driver, gunner, commander's cupola (buttoned or open), and machine gunner (depending on the tank), or you can take a more arcade-like approach and play from an external view (you can still drive and fire). Customization touches range from the atmospheric (you'll be able to personalize your tank's interior with pinups) to the militant (change your camouflage and weapons configurations within the restrictions of your unit and theatre); you can even tweak the modeling by changing your tank's reliability, weapons accuracy, and supplies of fuel and ammo, and if you have a lower-end system you can change the game's level of detail to improve frame rates.



▲ The buttoned-up views are realistically constricted

◀ While you can't really tell from this still shot, the tanks rock realistically when firing

Long known as a wargame company, SSI has been gaining respect as a producer of simulations; they may not put out many, but games like *Silent Hunter* and *Su-27 Flanker* prove that they can put out serious titles. Whether they can accomplish on the ground what they've accomplished in the skies and seas remains to be seen, but from what we've seen they're well along the ground sim campaign trail. –*Scott Udell*

Panzer Commander • SSI • Windows 95

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1. Unscramble the names of the 3 legendary Star Trek instructors featured in Starfleet Academy.

RIKK _ _ _ _ LUUS _ _ _ _ _
17

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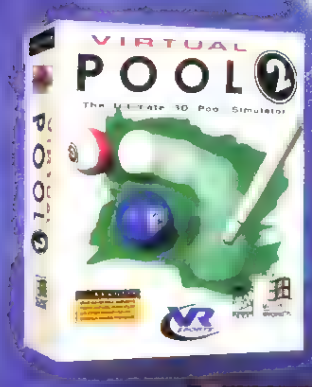

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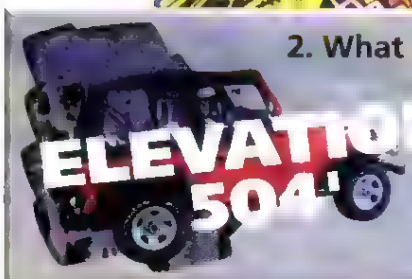

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PC CD-ROM

"It's A Heck Of A Hayride"
- Gamespot

"The Funniest Game We've Played this Year Y'all"
- Happy Puppy

"One Of The Most Hysterical Games In Years"
- Online Games Review

"The Bestest Thing To Hit The South"
- Strategy Plus

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3. Complete the Redneck Rampage Word Search.

G	B	G	I	P	V	D	I	C	C
T	U	R	D	M	I	N	I	O	N
K	B	N	I	I	X	I	W	O	E
R	B	O	N	Y	E	R	S	T	I
O	A	D	R	A	N	O	E	L	L
P	I	N	E	K	C	I	H	C	A

Gun
Pig
Vixen
Coot
Cow
Turdminion
Bony
Yer
Leonard
Pork
Chicken
Alien
Bubba
Rind

5 letters are unused. 4 are the letter I. What's the 5th?

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520 HORSES UNDER THE HOOD.
EVEN MORE PEDESTRIANS ON TOP.**

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THE INFINITE ABYSS

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WINDOWS®95 CD-ROM

HUDSON

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4. It's an addictive action/arcade game, where you race against the clock to blow your opponents to smithereens.

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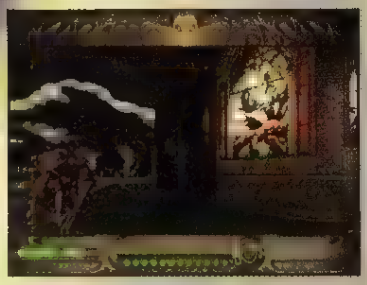
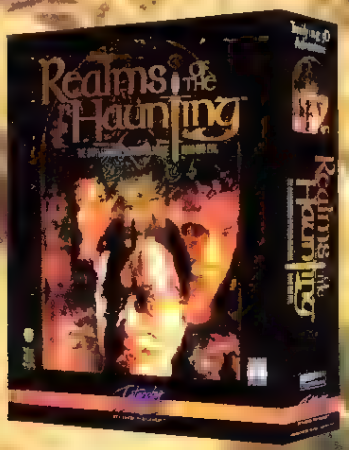


One by one, the Seals of protection have been broken. Step by step, Darkness prepares for its final assault. And as the apocalypse draws near, only one force can stop the shadow of evil from eternal reign...you.



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★★★★½ *CGW*

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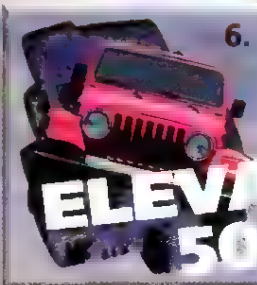

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- Over 50 mini-quests with multiple solutions take you through devastated wastelands such as Rad Scorpion dens, Junktown, and the Brotherhood of Steel.
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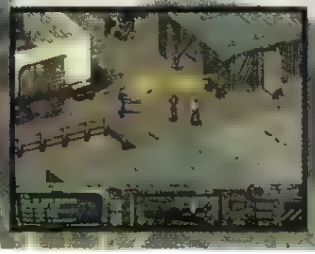

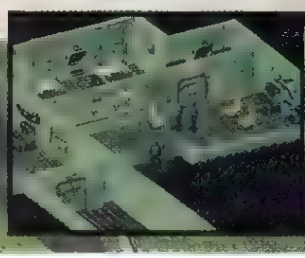

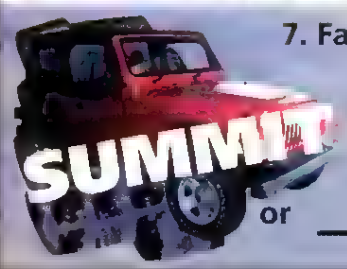

7. Fallout is a post-nuclear role playing game with over 50 mini-quests where you can target specific body parts to:

__ __ __ __ __, __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __,

or __ __ __ __, as __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __.

2 9

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DIAMOND MULTIMEDIA

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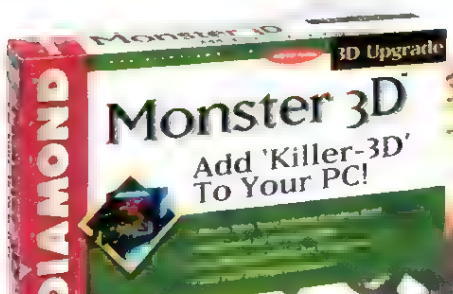

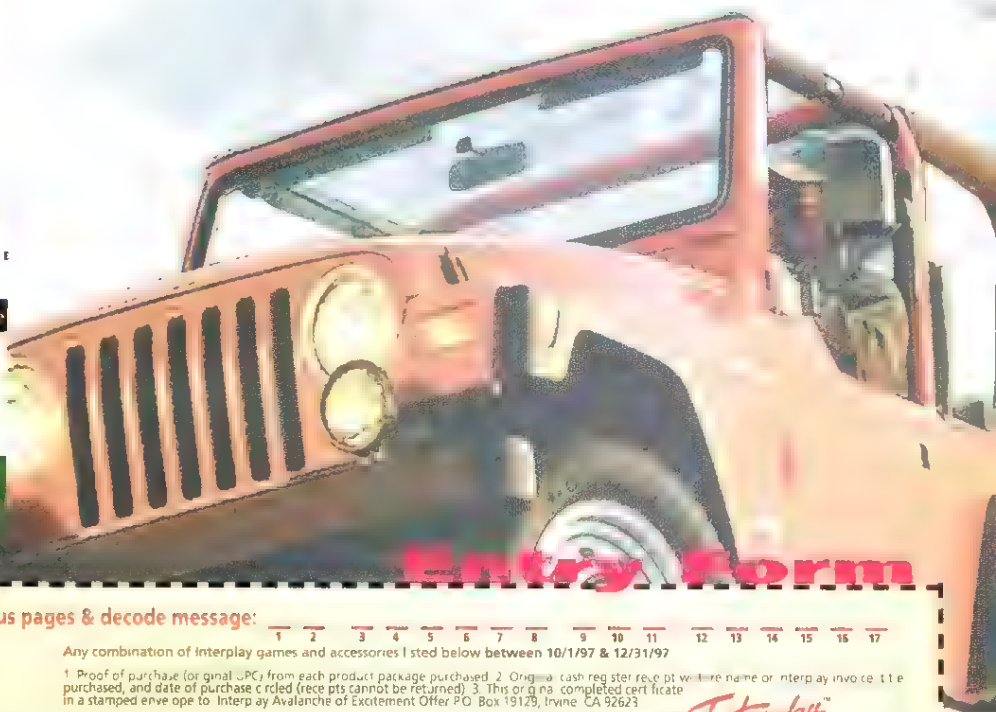

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Take circled letters from puzzles on the previous pages & decode message:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Eligible Interplay Titles:
(check all that you purchased, maximum of 4 games without additional accessory purchases, maximum 6 with accessory purchases)

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- Redneck Rampage™
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From the creators of Star Trek™ Starfleet Academy,™ Star Trek

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INTERACTIVE EPISODES. ALL DIGITAL.

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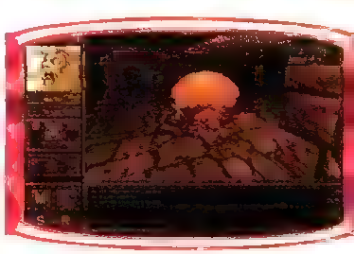
INTRODUCING DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN, THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY NEW AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS COMPUTER GAME EVER. BASED ON AN ENHANCED, SVGA VERSION OF THE AWARD-WINNING DESCENT ENGINE, YOU ARE CHALLENGED TO BUILD AN AUTHENTIC AD&D CHARACTER AND PLUNGE DEEP IN TO UNDERMOUNTAIN — A TWISTING DUNGEON LABYRINTH LOCATED BENEATH THE CITY OF WATERDEEP. HERE YOU WILL ENCOUNTER AN INCREDIBLE 360° WORLD FILLED WITH SHADOWY HALLS, ANCIENT CRYPTS AND ABANDONED TOMBS — NOT TO MENTION A TERRIFYING ASSORTMENT OF CREATURES WHO CALL UNDERMOUNTAIN THEIR HOME. SOLVE THE RIDDLE OF UNDERMOUNTAIN AND YOU WILL CERTAINLY AMASS A PILE OF GOLD. FAIL AND YOU WILL BECOME A MERE PILE OF BONES.



EITHER WAY, YOU'RE GOING DOWN LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN™

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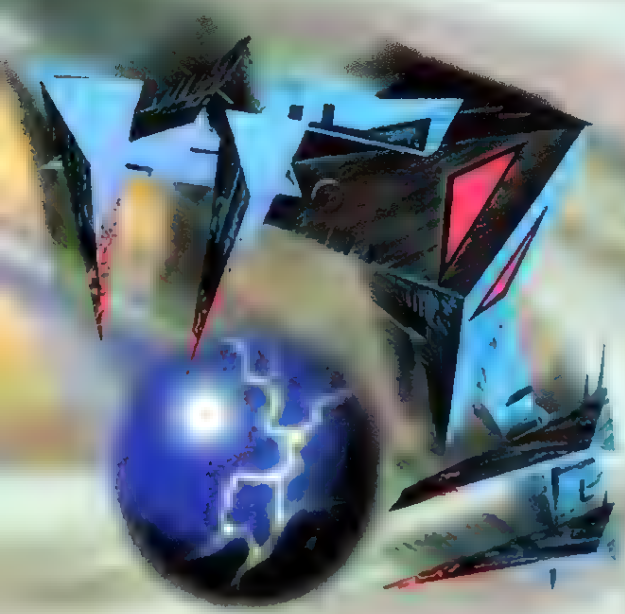
FORGOTTEN REALMS SETTING



- Experience more than 25 different levels that come alive in full 3D 360° detail, from a dwarven temple to an ancient Egyptian crypt
- Build your character using true AD&D role playing elements — 6 different races and single or multi-classed options. Your choice of character class leads to unique abilities and will also affect the way the game plays. If you choose a thief character, you can climb walls.
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one of them
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Sinners beware, the purification is near ...

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- Lightning Fast, Real-Time Adventure Game with Dramatic Multiple Endings
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- Post-Apocalyptic soundtrack by the Mo'ers
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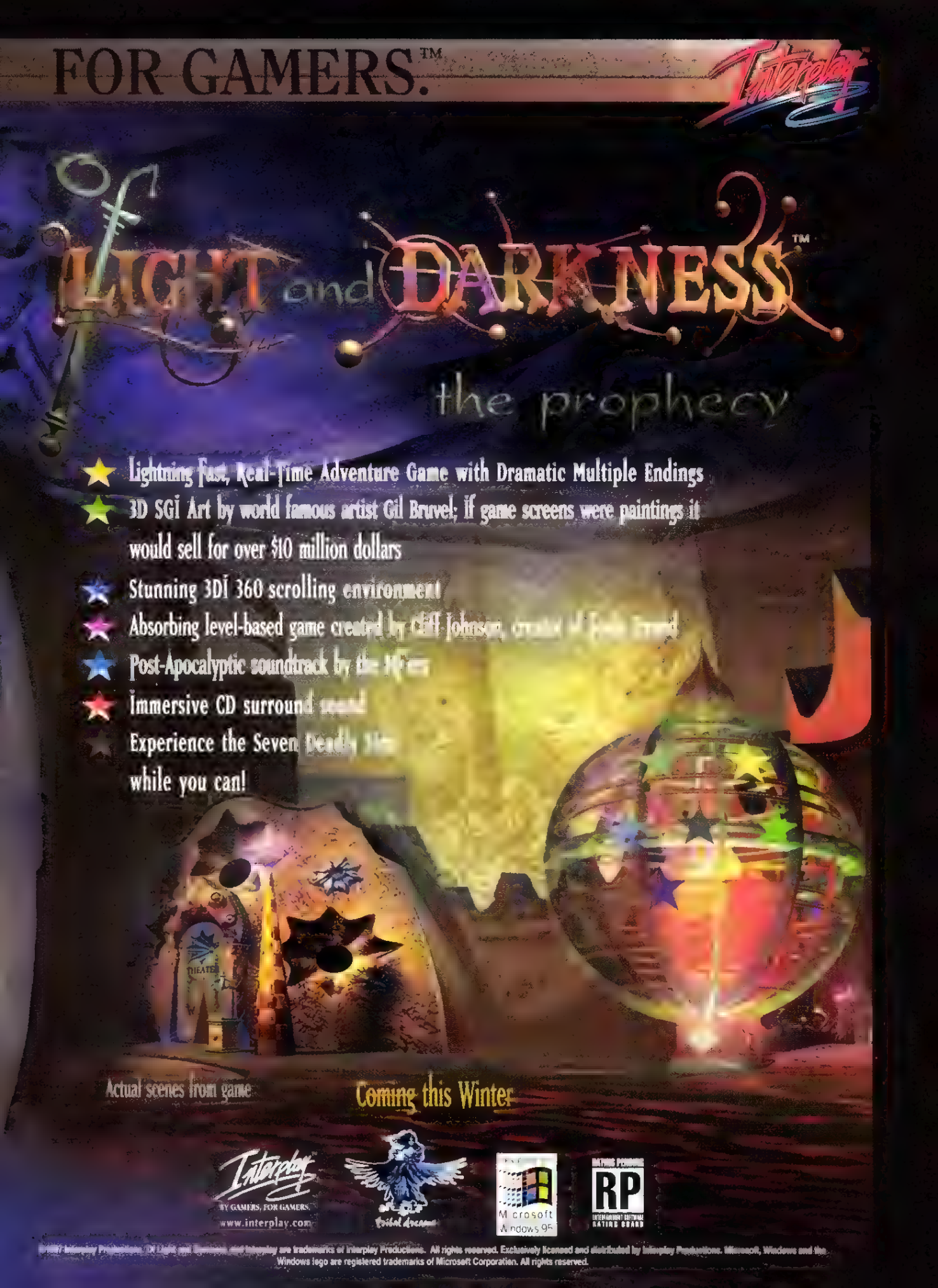
- Experience the Seven Deadly Sins while you can!



Actual scenes from game

Coming this Winter

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Virtual Dreams

Microsoft Windows 95

RP
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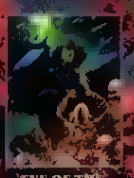
together for the first time.



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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

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5 out of 5 Stars
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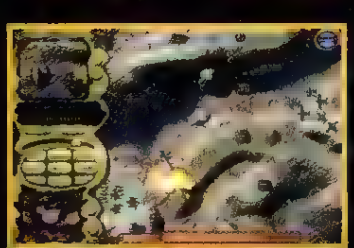
You Create The PERFECT SEQUEL.

MAX 2: Complete Real-Time Combat

3D terrain affects movement, line of sight, and combat results

Alien units regenerate and improve with experience



- Optional Pause To Give Orders
- Complete Scenario Editor
- Multiplayer Capability (Lan, Modem, Internet) With Alliance Building
- Simultaneously view multiple Areas of The map With The Spy Cam

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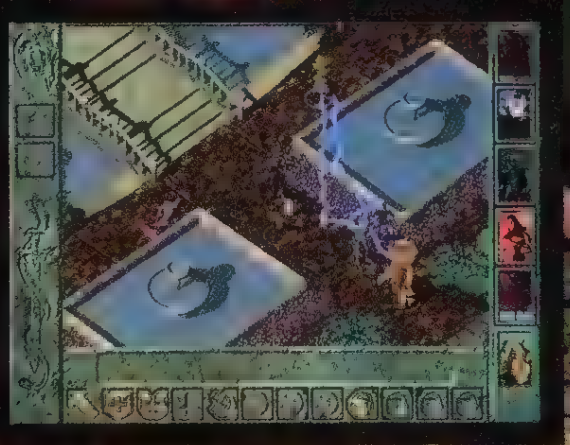

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Baldur's Gate™

ARRIVING MARCH, 1998

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Create, store and trade killer custom
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Dismember. Massacre.

Complete Freedom of Movement. Precision Killing.

"We're not talking about your standard run-and-gun four-player session here."
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"Seriously Hot!"
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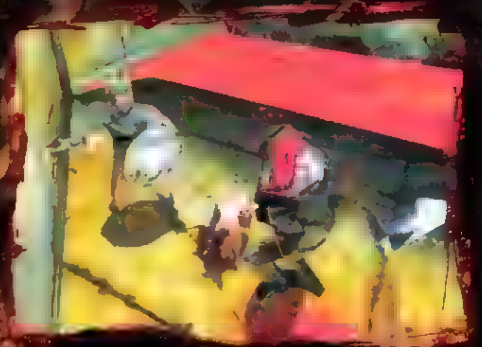

Chop off heads, sever limbs and bring your enemy to his knees (literally).

Coming This Fall

DIE BY THE SWORD™

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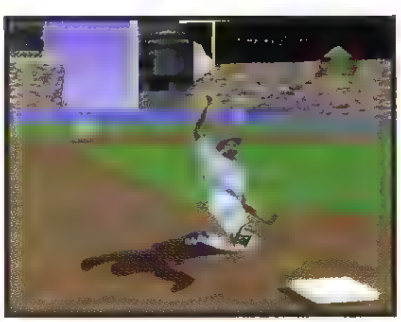

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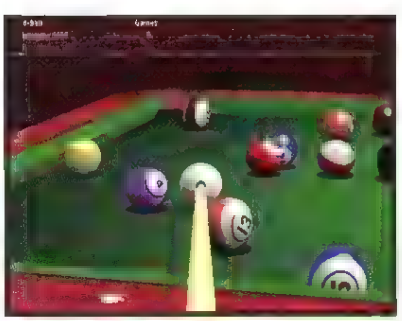
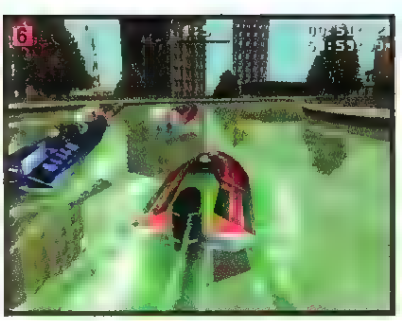


Virtual Pool™ 2



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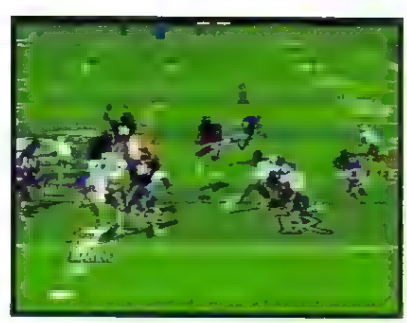

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ADJUST ENGINE TRIM FOR SPEED
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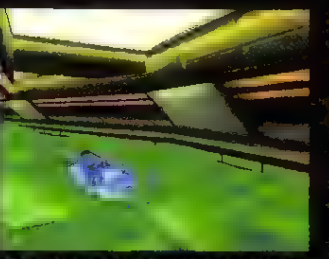
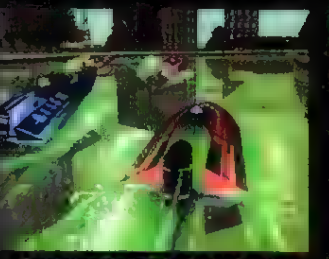
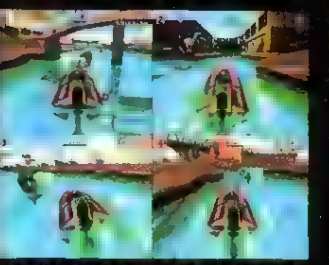
Strap in and throttle up as you whip through the most realistic and immersive powerboat racing game ever made. Jump over roadways and through passing convoys or speed between oil tankers before they close off the track and turn your boat to splinters. Find a shortcut and take the lead, or better yet, secure your victory and force your opponent into a river barge at 200 miles per hour.



Check out the tunnels but don't get too friendly with the walls.



See the sights in New York, but watch out for the cabs!



Split your screen 4 ways and play 3 friends simultaneously.

Use first-person or third-person "fly-cam" to catch all the action!

- Dive under water, crash through waves and careen off jumps.
- Fully interactive 3D environments that continually change during races.
- Race computer opponents or compete with up to eight networked players.
- Eight super-intense racetracks from around the world to tear through.
- Can't find a worthy opponent? Race your "ghost" using your own best time.

Available January '98!

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VR SPORTS

PlayStation

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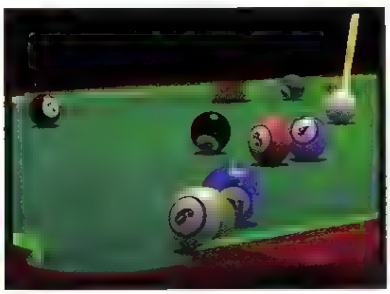
The Difference Is Real

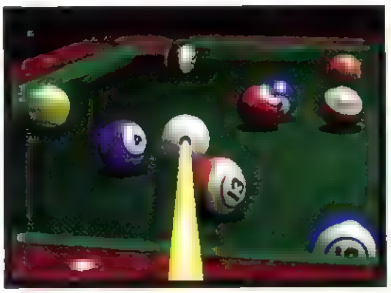
VR SPORTS

SOMETIMES, A LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY TAKES A LITTLE JUMP

Actual PC screenshots



- All new physics model that allows you to call shots and even jump balls!



- Real-time photorealistic animation, 3 texture-mapped pool halls and 5 new games.

- Over 8000 man hours of enhancements and over 50 new game features

ALL NEW! *Sequel to the best-selling pool simulator!*

The ultimate pool simulator just got better. ***Guaranteed.***

Over 2 million pool players have taken a break with Virtual Pool, the #1 pool game in the world. Now, with 5 new games, 3 modes of play (Amateur, Pro and Championship), adjustable table characteristics, 128 computer opponents, network play, new pool tutorial and a tournament mode with up to 16 challengers, Virtual Pool 2 is better than ever. Designed by physicists and mathematicians, Virtual Pool 2 is the only real time 3D pool game guaranteed to improve your game ..or your money back!

THIS GAME WILL IMPROVE YOUR ACTUAL POOL PLAY OR YOUR MONEY BACK.
DETAILS INSIDE PACKAGE.
GUARANTEE

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

AGE 18 ADULTS
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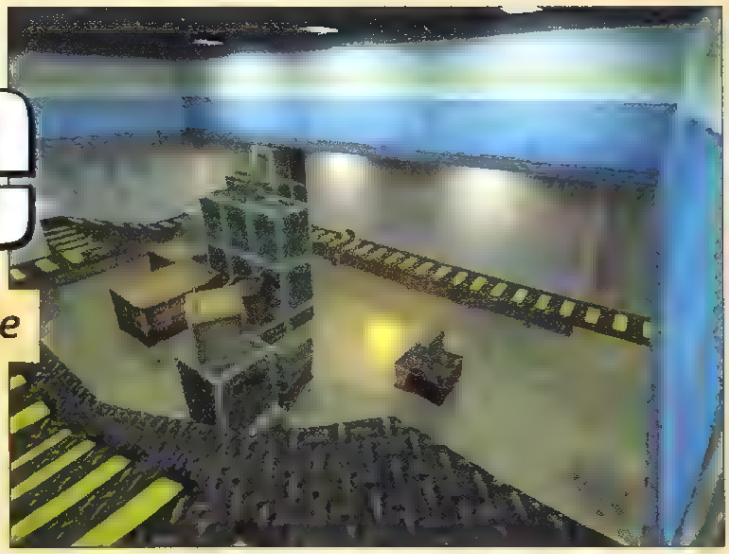
Half-Life

Making the competition Quake



Perhaps the most revolutionary thing about the game is its bright environments

First there was *Quake*, and it was good. Now comes the next-generation games made from its technology, *Hexen II* and *Half-Life*. While the former has already received plenty of press, the specs for *Half-Life* show it's equally worthy of attention. With its advanced AI and technological enhancements, it's easily the most ambitious of the *Quake* games.

You start the game as a lowly research assistant working on a top secret project in a converted missile silo. An accident fractures the fabric of space-time and causes hordes of creatures from another dimension to drop on into our world. With monsters everywhere, and your fellow scientists proving to be tasty alien food, you decide to leave. However, wouldn't you know it – much of the security system is still functioning, forcing you to scavenge keys and codes.

As you maneuver through the environments, you stumble on another scientist who has a dimensional stabilizer, which will stem the tide of beasties. As you make your way to the surface, you find the Government has arrived, and it's getting uglier. After watching the carnage for your own personal amusement, you retreat back down into another silo. Eventually, you'll make it into the alien's world (of course) and save humanity (of course).

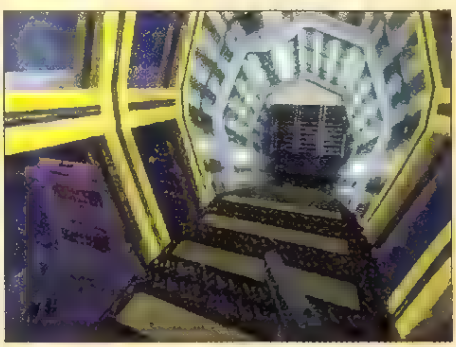
Everyone who was shown the game at the Electronic Entertainment Expo was walked through a number of rooms that showed off the game's various features. Its AI received the majority of the press, and with a few levels actually in place and populated by creatures, we were finally given the opportunity to test it for ourselves.

Overall, despite a few rough spots that are expected in an a pre-alpha build, it works pretty much as advertised. Approaching a hallway filled with enemy troops, they hid and ducked behind boxes, with one turning tail and running down a hallway. They bounced grenades off of walls, and generally made themselves tough to hit (though they had a propensity for not quite hiding their entire bodies, always leaving a little bit of shoulder present for sniping).

The animation for the troops, though, is quite impressive. The troops bend over to re-load their weapons, and convincingly throw grenades. The figures use a skeletal animation system created by developer Valve which models the bone structure beneath the "skin" (or textures) of the figure. This technology has allowed the artists to generate more frames per creature than is found in the average 3D shooter, allowing for more variety in the movement.

The environment is more interactive than that found in *Quake*, with bullet holes and blast marks appearing on walls. You can shoot out glass to your hearts content – however, no word on whether there will be any toilets to shoot. As with *Hexen*, the environments give the illusion of being seamlessly linked together, with no "end of level" button to press.

Sound does a lot to increase the gamer's immersion in an environment, and Valve has tweaked that aspect of *Quake* with 3D sound and real-time DSP (Digital Signal Processing). With the latter technology, sounds vary in pitch, volume and duration depending on the geometry of the environment, from the echo of large rooms to the reverberation in a metal room.



▲ **Oodles of color enlivens the rooms**

◀ **Up close and personal with a bad guy**

The only fear with *Half-Life* is that its reliance on its technological advantage may somehow prove detrimental to its overall playability. 16-bit color textures sound good on paper, but in action it's a tossup whether the game is actually better looking than *Hexen II* and its 8-bit textures (in 3Dfx mode, of course). All of the lighting effects – multiple transparent textures, translucent water, colored lights mixing together to form additional colors – also sound good, but what do they bring to the game beyond the "wow, colored lights" factor? (Admittedly, the flashlight illuminating a dark room is an effect that can easily be integrated into gameplay.)

All of these high-tech doo-dads conspire to bring up the big killer of 3D game immersion – variable frame-rates. In admittedly un-optimized form, some of the more complex environments can bring an ultra-fast machine to its knees, even with the mighty 3Dfx card. Finally, will deathmatchers care one bit about the improvements in AI?

Regardless, with *Quake 2*, *Hexen II* and *Unreal* all scheduled to hit the shelves this fall, *Half-Life* still manages to stand out. We'll all have chance to get a *Half-Life* this November. *–Steve Bauman*

Half-Life • Sierra • Windows 95

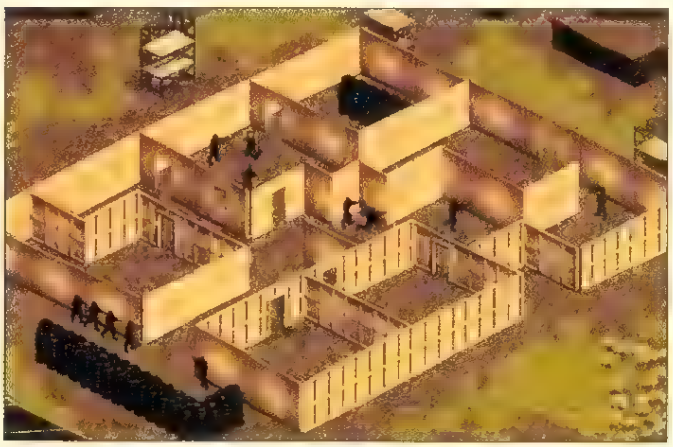
More lighthearted fun with the LAPD

Police Quest SWAT 2

Resizable in-game windows provide a totally customizable interface

In Sierra's world of sequels, the *Police Quest* legacy is quite long (not as long as, say, *Leisure Suit Larry*'s, but who's counting?). From beginning to end, though, it has taken a drastic curve. After four point-and-click adventures and a full motion video tactical simulation, we now see a real-time strategy game.

The original *SWAT* had all the desirable elements: high machismo value, loads of weapons and completely realistic SWAT tactics, but was a bit limited by the full motion video and its scarce three missions. We are now looking at a possible 50 missions, 25 per side (you may play as SWAT or the terrorists), that are generated on the fly so that even the same mission will play out differently each time. Unlike *Command & Conquer* and its (gulp) clones, this title follows more in the footsteps of a *Jagged Alliance* style game, with fewer units solving situations in a tactical setting.



And they haven't even seen the team waiting in the wings

Barbed wire protects the highly valuable rubbish

The resizable playing field is square tile-based, with a three-quarter bird's eye view similar to *Diablo*. They toyed with the idea of diamond tiles but the idea was thrown out because of redraw issues. Choose five units per team from 120 fully rendered 3D characters, each with its own particular AI. The characters will have very distinct skills, weaknesses and personalities – another boost for replayability since it's sure to take quite a few tries to assemble "just the right team," and "just the right team" is bound *not* to be the right team in every instance. In addition to your squad, you will be able to control special units such as snipers, a Crisis Negotiation Team, the LAPD helicopter and the SWAT tank. The missions are based on actual LAPD SWAT incidents (locals may not want to know that…), and the inimitable Daryl F. Gates will be on hand to guide you, only when you're playing "the good guys" (that's the SWAT side…for those that might be morally impaired). For the terrorists, fun activities will include bombing, kidnapping, raids and yard sales, er, scratch that last one.

In the first *SWAT*, following actual SWAT tactics by the book was *de rigeur* – if you didn't, back to training you went. Here the designers have given us a bit more leeway; you will be able to act against procedure – kill, beat, maim and torture even – but although that's lots of fun (just ask the LAPD), you will not be rewarded for it. Virtual public perception of your activities will have a lot to do with the level of your budget, so on the SWAT side of the coin, it is not a good idea to go off like a stress-crazed lunatic in desperate need of retirement.

Up to eight people may compete head-to-head, or group together as teams via modem, LAN or Internet. Multiplayer games will have simplified mission objectives and will offer the player more than one team to control (player's choice how many). Why wouldn't you always want to have every possible unit? One reason is that it would be a micro-management nightmare, another is that an uneven number of teams offers handicapping possibilities – better players could increase their challenge if they opt for fewer units; but mostly, unless you're in a deathmatch situation, it does not necessarily help to *have* that many units, since the objective is not always to kill the other team. The unit-selection options are also under budgetary restriction – so will you want more bodies, or weapons and equipment instead?

When the first *SWAT* was doing extremely well at the box office, and the decision was made to do a sequel, the cauldron of real time strategy games was just beginning to bubble. Now that it's boiling and erupting, everyone who has one in the pot is gasping and struggling to show how theirs stands apart from the rest. They believe that there is less of a proliferation of real-time squad based games and that this, along with the *Police Quest* legacy and actual tie-ins with the LAPD are the hook. Sounds feasible. *–Cindy Yans*

Daryl F. Gates' Police Quest: SWAT 2 • Sierra On-line • Windows 95

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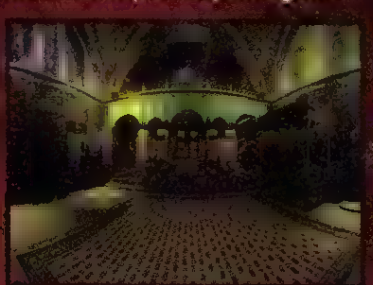

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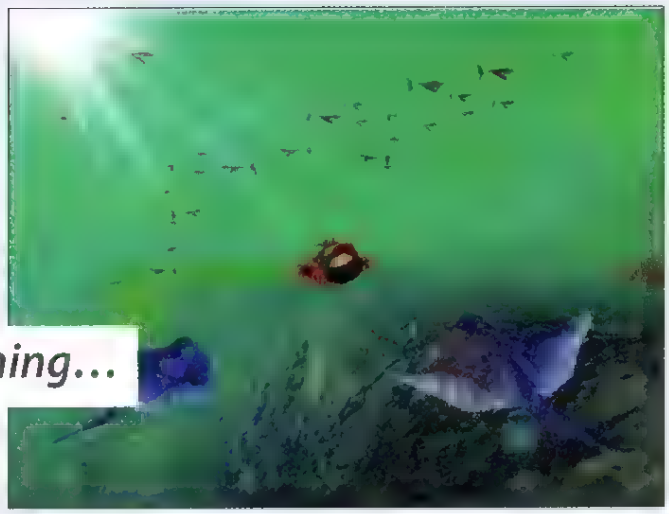


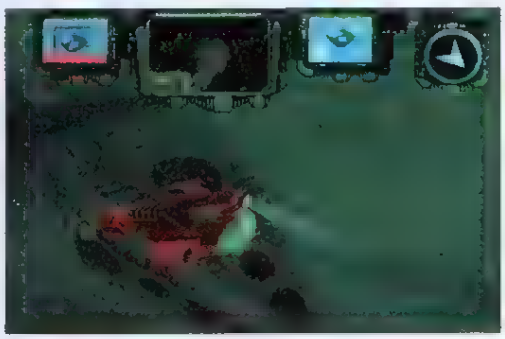
The aquatic life in SubCulture makes the environment feel almost alive ▶

SubCulture

Tiny lives in the deep blue something...

Fans of Blue Byte's Archimedean Dynasty, or of under-sea adventure, may want to turn their rudders towards Criterion Studios' upcoming *SubCulture*. Previously known for *Scorched Planet*, Criterion has taken a big step forward in immersive graphic environments with their 3D-accelerated underwater seascape. While the game lacks the deep layer of conversation and character interaction of *Archimedean Dynasty*, it does give you free reign to travel throughout the undersea world.

SubCulture takes place on Earth, where you're a member of a race of tiny undersea men. You play a mercenary whose home has been destroyed by a tin can that fell overboard from a polluting human ship. This leaves you scouring the ocean floor for crystals, pearls and metals to harvest for profit. You also seek freelance employment from either the Bohine or the Prochas, two opposing factions who are carrying out a covert wars against each other. You'll also come into contact with pirates, the Brotherhood (a pseudo-religious trading cult), and over 20 types of aquatic life including various fish and giant sea turtles (all suitably large given your diminutive size). The ocean floor is also littered with human garbage like cigarette butts, bottle caps, coins and, of course, a big tin can.



◀ The Brotherhood's refinery is dangerously close to pirate territory, but is an important stop for any sub-miner

There's no lack of danger in SubCulture, so good piloting and combat skills are imperative ▼

As with *Archimedean Dynasty* and the *Wing Commander* games, the missions cover a variety of tasks, from rescue to search and destroy, and the game's undersea environment helps set the situation. For instance, an early mission requires you to latch an escape pod onto a sub carrying scientists to Aquatraz, the local prison, and you must keep the sub in tow long enough to give the scientists time to get secure in the pod before returning them to their base. You can even acquire an ROV, similar to the robot seen in the movie *The Abyss*, to scout things out, and there are chasms and caves to discover and plunder for resources. The game will be divided into four stages, and the missions you take will directly affect your relations with the various factions in the game, adding a nice layer of replayability since both sides have different tasks. This also helps make up for the game's lack of multiplayer options.

Easily the most distinctive facet to the game, however, is the lush undersea environment. The sea life that moves its way through the murky depths will interact with you at times (some fish attack you, while others seem to be attracted to your bright yellow submarine), and help make the environment feel more real and fluid (so to speak). The game has day and night modes, adjusting the light levels accordingly, and the ocean's ceiling is a strikingly rendered, with its rolling surface and spikes of light penetrating the water from the sun above. Of course, you can't actually go to the surface. The game's use of "fogging" seems more natural in this water world then it would on a surface based game. Also, the particle effects, bubbles and general feeling of watery "sway" are extremely distinctive.

SubCulture's little touches such as specks of pollution bobbing and getting pulled along under the currents makes the illusion of its environment much more complete. In the beta tested here, your own vessel doesn't actually generate a shadow, which does detract somewhat from the otherwise immersive environment. Hopefully this will get fixed in the final version, as Criterion hurries to tweak *SubCulture*'s gameplay so that it will be out in time for the holidays. *–Jason D'Aprile*

SubCulture • UbiSoft • Windows 95

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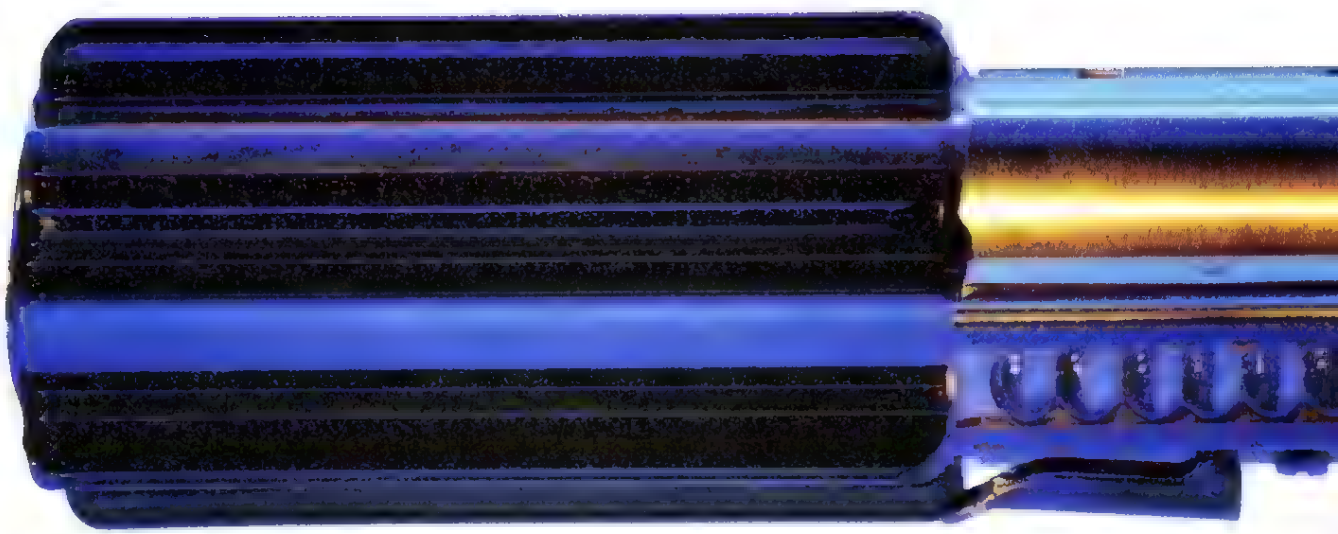

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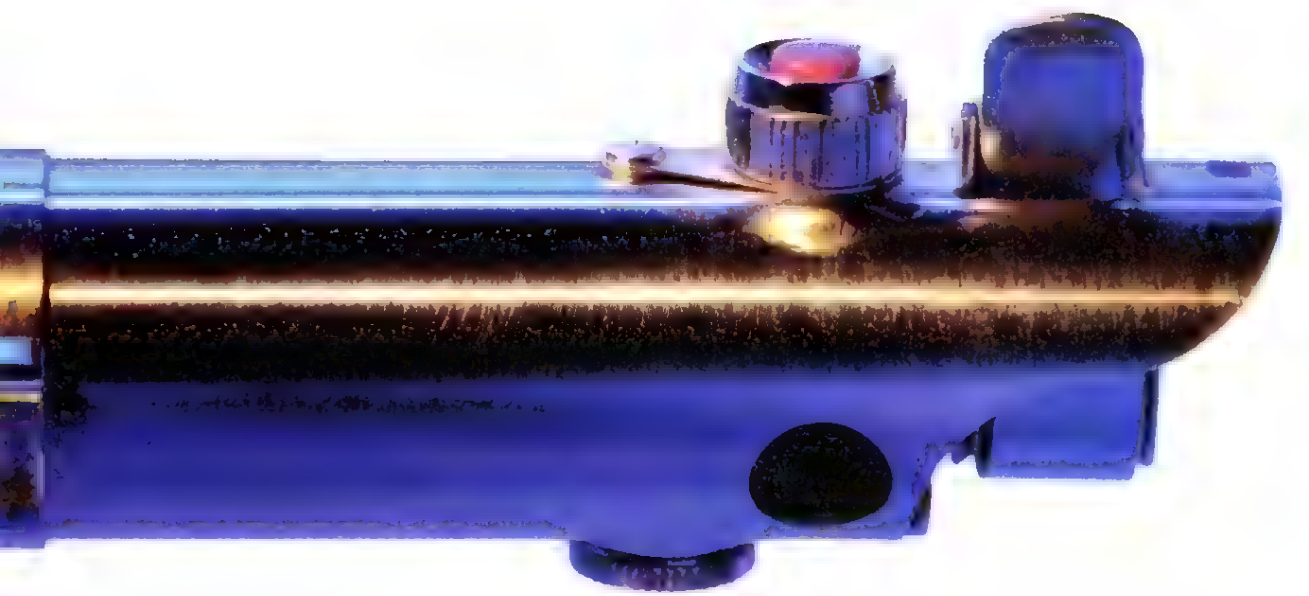

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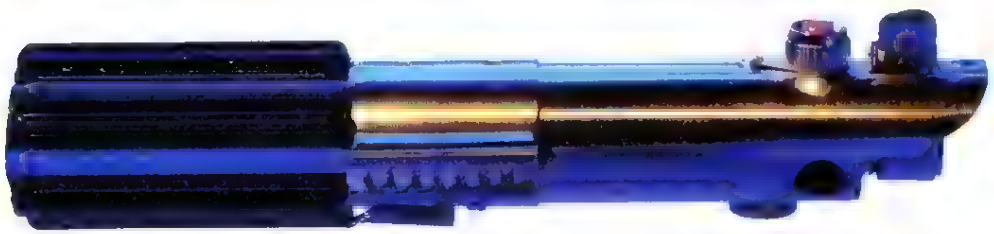

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So . . . who here believes you get what you pay for? (Our imaginary audience reacts quickly – most hands go up.)

OK, then – who here believes the new free services are the best thing since sliced bread? Nerf weaponry? Heck, even lawn darts?

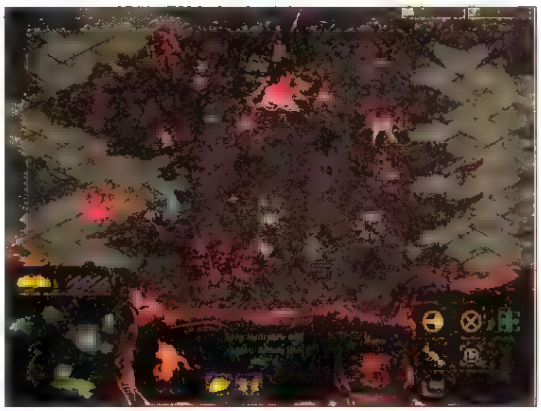
(Some grumbled mutterings from the pay services, but most hands go up again.)

All right – last question: Who believes the free services will *stay* free?

(More muttering, people look slyly at one another waiting for someone to go first; hands eventually go up and down in confusion, and everyone looks around for guidance.)

The reaction to this last question pretty much epitomizes the state the online gaming industry finds itself in right now. Chaos reigns, and although you hear a lot of brave talk, nobody really knows whether a free or pay model (or a combination of the two) will end up driving the industry. Pay services such as TEN, Engage and WorldPlay are fighting to keep charging for their products, but it's currently an uphill battle against consumer perception – especially when facing the new breed of free services from game companies like Blizzard and Westwood. On top of all that, they must also contend with IPX/Net emulators such as Kali and Kahn. Finally, though, in what is the oddest thing of all, consumers are coming to the conclusion that free-play is here to stay – even before all of the smoke clears.

The Mplayer Plus area contains many titles already playable for free over the net



Blizzard plans to blaze new frontiers with the battle.net implementation of Starcraft

TEN continues to push the pay-to-play model... and time might just prove them right

I'm afraid I'm here to rain a little on that parade. I don't believe free services will remain free, and I think pay-to-play is here to stay in some fashion. That's not to say that there won't be any free content on the net; however, in the long run it's likely much, if not most, of that free content will be old titles or filler, and the premium content will cost you.

Let's take a closer look at the facts. This entire "free is here to stay" fervor started when Mplayer first shifted (some say out of desperation) to its free model. But you know what? If you look closely, you quickly realize the only content that went free on Mplayer were titles that were already easily playable over the net. The existing "premium" content was slipped into the Mplayer Plus side of the equation, which costs $29.95 a *year*. But wait! I can already hear the crowds cry, "But that's definitely cheaper!"

True.

But that's *also* paying money, which, by any definition, *isn't* free. And just what content have you already seen in the Plus area? *Quake*? *Red Alert*? You can play these titles in a variety of ways for free, not including the obvious methods such as QuakeWorld or Westwood Chat.

Of course, we can't forget the online only content coming onto Mplayer. Although the first announced title *WarSport* is hoping to survive as an advertiser-subsidized game, it's hard to see that sufficient advertising dollars are actually there. Other online-only titles are said to be under development, too, and it's also been rumored that Mplayer is contemplating yet a third pricing plan – in other words, a pay-to-play plan for premium content. Care to guess where these future online-only titles will fall?

Microsoft is also planning to charge for their content, and as the quality of online-only titles goes up, and they become more popular, it's hard to imagine the company

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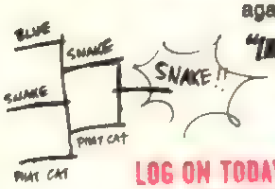

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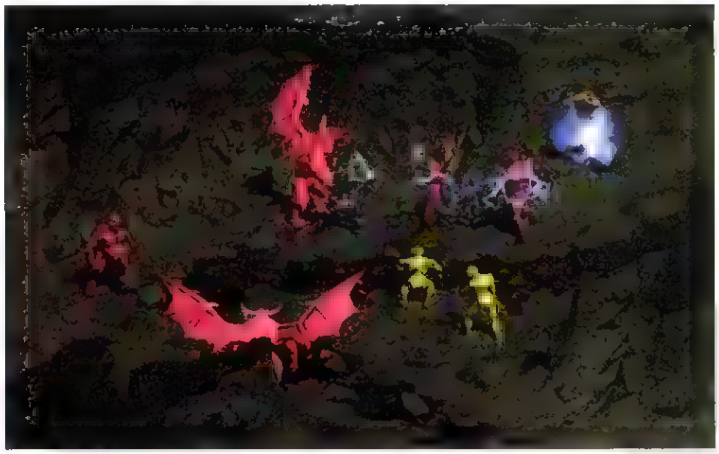

Diablo's high quality was one of the many factors that contributed to battle.net's early success

Mplayer's WarSport

Microsoft's upcoming Asheron's Call

not continuing down that path. *Asheron's Call* and *Fighter Ace* are the first premium titles that will be charged for on the Internet Gaming Zone – and you can bet there will be more as time goes by.

(Someone from our imaginary audience cries, "What about battle.net, and its incredible success with *Diablo*? They've got over a million users!")

Ah yes . . . Blizzard's battle.net – a perennial favorite of the free-service advocates. Don't get me wrong – I think battle.net is an incredible achievement, and definitely deserves the accolades it has received. However, I also have to point out that up to now the entire success of battle.net was predicated by the success of *Diablo* – a definite "A" title if there ever was one. And the extra costs incurred to put up the (admittedly basic) service battle.net currently provides are easily covered by the extra copies Blizzard can sell at retail.

So, at first glance, battle.net definitely seems like a huge success. And indeed, its million accounts are nothing to scoff at. But pause a moment, and chew on it a little more. I'll bet some questions come to mind. For example, just what does that number *mean?* Does it mean there are a million individual users? Or are they just accounts? And if they're accounts, how many are duplicate accounts registered to a single user? Beyond that, once you have a real number for individual *users* (not accounts), how many of those users are actually *current* players? (For the sake of the argument we'll define "current" as having played on the service within the last month.) Finally, how many of those accounts are people who logged in once out of curiosity and never played again?

But wait! There's more!

What happens when Blizzard (or another game company) *doesn't* have another *Diablo* megahit? What if every company has some sort of free play option, and the online gaming scene is much like your favorite store shelves, blanketed with mediocre titles along with the few gems?

What happens, then, is that free play has become a commodity – something every title has to have to be competitive – and suddenly you've added another layer of cost to doing business. This additional cost comes at a time when rapidly-escalating game budgets are making it harder and harder to simply get a decent return on a title. Advertising certainly won't pick up all the slack – especially when those advertisers get burnt on some of those aforementioned mediocre titles. On top of all that, pressure from competing free services will force the game companies to expand *their* services, and add features.

battle.net is notorious for its hacking problems, which can all be traced back to the fact that the service is a stateless system. Its current architecture can be best summarized as a chat room that lets you launch games. Once you launch a game, the game clients connect directly to each other; you're not even connected to the battle.net system while playing. The advantage of this is dramatically lower cost – Blizzard doesn't have to support the backend to store persistent information such as accounts, screen names, ranking/score tables, and tournament data. However, in order to stay competitive (and, to be fair, support users' requests) Blizzard recently announced that it's going to expand the system to include such features.

Go ahead – blink a few times. That's right – you're not seeing things. What you're looking at is a very TEN- or Mplayer-like service – the same services that are having huge problems supporting their infrastructure due to the great cost. At some point Blizzard (and other game companies in the same position) will have to pass on the costs. It'll be for premium content, and for added features, but it will cost, nonetheless.

I'd like to state that I'm not picking on Blizzard for any reason except for the fact that they did it "right" first. Most of the points above can be applied to any "free" service, including Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone and Westwood Chat. I sincerely believe battle.net is an amazing achievement, and am definitely looking forward to playing *Starcraft* over it. However, I do hope that people also realize that Blizzard has only taken the first baby steps toward online gaming nirvana, and that as they add requested features, it's likely battle.net will one day become a pay service of some sort. The question is whether the added costs will be too much for some companies to bear, in which case we might see some consolidation. And once that's happened, it's not too much of a stretch to see a renaissance of dedicated pay gaming services. It sure would be an interesting turn-around.

To sum up, it's a little premature to be hailing the advent of free play gaming over the Internet. Rather, it looks as though all this current free play craze has done is force companies to reconsider their pricing models, and in many cases lower their prices. The question is whether it's really a win-win situation for gamers. At some point a few of these companies are going to go out of business, and your choices will be limited somewhat. We'll see free games, all right – there's no doubt about that. But in the long run you'll be paying to play the good stuff.

–André Vrignaud

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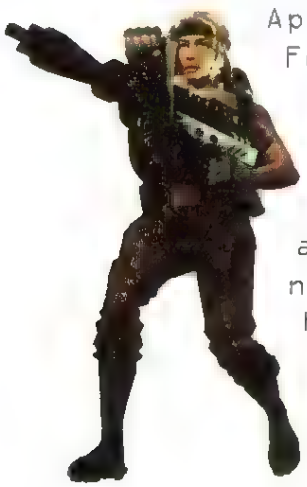

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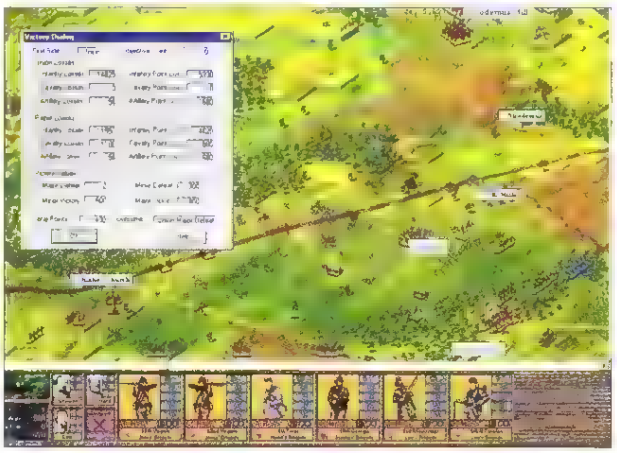
Command Post

Of maps and manuals

▲ Instead of making use of higher resolutions, many strategy games and wargames use contrivances like multiple zoom levels (pictured: Sierra's Civil War Generals)

Well, this is my second try at this month's column (the first was about the incongruity of game ratings and strategy game subjects, bloody first-person shooters get "teen" or "adult" ratings, whereas games encompassing death on a far larger scale are "for all ages," something that lead me to jaw that "homicide's for adults, but genocide's for kids"). I was in full *grognard* grumble mode, but I shook it off; this time I'll moderate my grumble somewhat.

The topics *de jour* have to do with maps and manuals in strategy games in general and wargames in particular. Maps... I've grumped about this one before, but it continues to be a problem. One of the biggest complaints from boardgamers (especially board wargamers) trying to make the move to computer games is that the viewable maps/boards are just so darned small; whereas they're used to seeing a game spread out before them on a table, upon moving to the computer they discover they can only see a fraction of the action at a time, something that makes it hard to grasp the overall picture. Sure, computer game designers long ago came up with contrivances like zoom maps and so forth, but what about the simple expedience of making use of larger resolutions? Mac gamers are used to this, but all too-often designers on the PC side ignore higher resolutions, either switching to a lower-res or just displaying their map in a portion of the screen, surrounded by blank space.



▲ Antietam's Cornfield after one of my PBEM battles – bloody indeed, but game ratings don't reflect it

While this might be excusable in DOS games (although not really; if the five-year old *V for Victory* series can use multiple resolutions, modern games should too), I really don't understand why Windows based games can't use my extra screen space, especially if they're tile based. I've asked a couple of designers why they don't use the higher resolutions to display more map (or at least provide the option), and I usually get blank looks, almost like they're asking why I'd want to do that (to which I want to slip into the vernacular and respond, "Well, DUH!")

Manuals are the second gripe-of-the month; like the weather, everyone complains about them but nobody seems to do much, especially the publishers. Well, that may not be fair – at least the trend to eliminate hardcopy manuals seems to have been (temporarily?) derailed. Now, I'll admit it – I love a good game manual (yes, I'm the one who "dines with them"), so maybe that means I'm a tad biased – but I don't care. A solid, well thought out manual can provide me the information I need to really get into a game, and can expand on the gameplay experience by suggesting things I might never have discovered in a game (*especially* if it has a bad interface, another gripe I won't go into).

In addition to describing the mechanics of the game's interface, a good manual should explain general game play as well; a *really* good one offers strategies and plenty of tables of data for those who like that kind of stuff. Oh, and manual writers – *please* put an index in your manual! If I could do it in Word Perfect for a term paper in 1989, you can do it with your fancy schmancy layout software in 1997, and it could save your game from negative backlash (I almost griped about the lack of a replay feature in *Steel Panthers II* PBEM games – only to have a friend point out that it was there... I just hadn't found it in the manual). And publishers, don't use the excuse of "production costs" with me – I'd rather pay a couple of extra bucks for my game than save the costs and pay $20 or more for a strategy guide that tells me things that should have been in the manual.

I've always been jealous of the sims folks as they tend to get nice juicy manuals, true, often they are filled out with the same "basics of flight" material, but some are really nice (oh for a Jane's manual in those complex wargames!). Some publishers are improving (kudos especially to SSI, whose recent manuals have lifted the company from one of the worst in the business to one of the best), some have always been pretty good (Arsenal's one game, *TacOps*, shipped with a good manual, especially for the PC version which had pages of strategies generated by players of the Mac version), and some continue to do badly much of the time (Sierra, fie on you for that *Birthright* "booklet").

Publishers are convinced that gamers don't use manuals, and for action games and adventures they may be right. For strategy games and wargames, however, I think a good manual is essential; if you agree let them know, as that's probably the only way they'll change. *Scott Udell*

On War

A moving experience

With the advent of new tank simulations I feel it is time to devote some attention to the Movement to Contact, Hasty Attack, and Deliberate Attack . Our force consists of a US Task Force (TF) of three tank and one mechanized teams

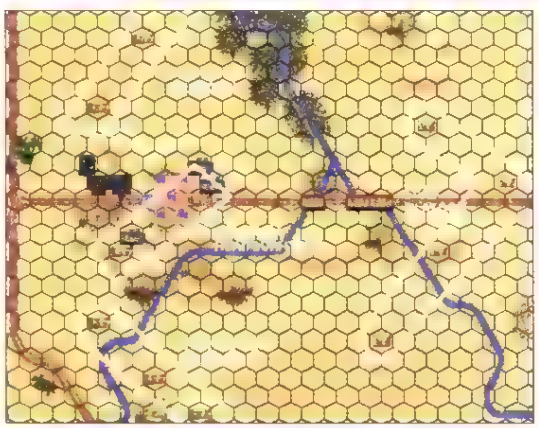
▲ Figure 1: Companies in Wedge, battalion in Column

The Movement to Contact

Movement to Contact is used when enemy contact is lost or when there is no information as to where he is A battalion conducting a movement to contact is assigned an axis of advance or a zone and an objective. It is not necessary to reach the objective or stop on it, rather, the true mission is to find the enemy

The TF moves as rapidly as possible to allow the enemy less time to react to its presence All-around security ensures the unit does not blunder into an enemy kill zone For this reason, the lead elements use bounding overwatch and covered and concealed routes, frequently keeping a piece of terrain between them and the enemy. Three principles to keep in mind are

- Make initial contact with the smallest force possible
- Make the best use of the terrain
- Use movement techniques which achieve maximum all around security



▲ Figure 2: Company in Wedge, platoons in Wedge

Considerations for Movement to Contact

Companies must be mutually supporting and assist each other by fire or movement. If teams move abreast, there must be good lateral routes or fields of fire to allow mutual support Units move in Column, Wedge, Vee, Echelon, Line, or Box formations. Initially, the lead companies move in traveling overwatch and the scout platoon uses bounding overwatch. In **Figure 1**, the battalion task force (TF) is in column and the companies in wedge. This ensures the battalion makes contact with the smallest force and retains freedom to maneuver. The TF maintains all around security. The scout platoon provides forward security, while other platoons provide flank and rear security. If the zone allows, the scouts check all possible enemy locations within direct fire range.

Figure 2 shows the lead company moving in company wedge with platoons in wedge. The distance between tanks ensures dispersion (so much dispersion that some tanks are off map), yet allows for mutual support since the sectors of fire all overlap This formation provides less fire power forward, but allows the commander flexibility in deploying when he makes contact, especially in close terrain

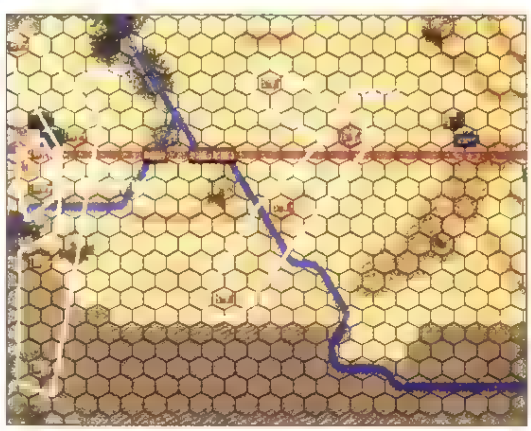
The TF moves along covered and concealed routes. While contradictory, it is possible to move faster thorough covered areas because it is easier to avoid enemy units. In order to enhance speed, engineers usually move with the lead company, which has responsibility for fostering forward movement by removing obstacles, repairing roads, and bridges, and covering main body deployment

Mortars, air defense, and field artillery move as far forward as necessary to provide support to the lead elements, but usually locate one-third of their range behind the lead units bound forward to provide continuous support. In **Figure 1** the mortar platoon moves in two sections, one with the battalion command group and the other behind the 2nd team. In a double column, the mortars move a section behind each lead team

The TF halts to allow the scouts to conduct zone or area reconnaissance ahead of the TF or to clear a danger areas. When halted, the TF assumes the Hasty Defense.

A single or a double column?

A single column formation is used to enhance control or when the terrain only permits movement on a single axis. Disadvantages to it are that it takes longer to deploy, is longer, and allows the enemy to inflict a maximum delay on the friendly force with a minimum expenditure of force The lead company has the responsibility, together with the scouts and engineers,



▲ Figure 3: Company in Column, platoons in Wedge

Moving on two or more axes allows greater security to the flanks, is quicker to deploy, allows mutual support, and presents multiple threats to the enemy, but it is harder to control. The lead company is the advance guard and provides flank security on their side of the zone. *Michael K Robel*

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Dynamix

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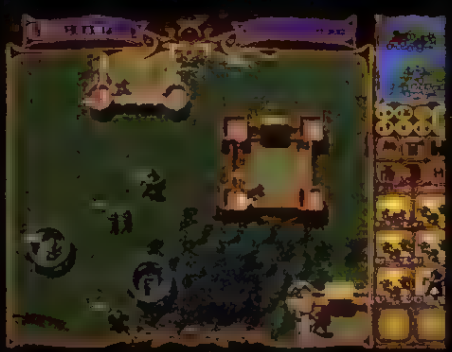

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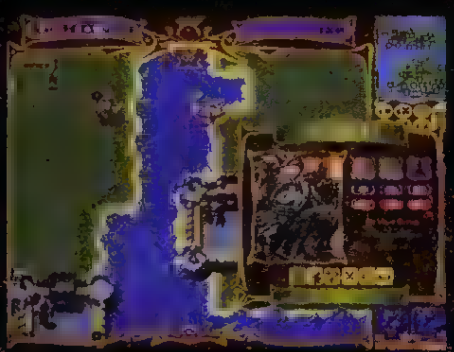

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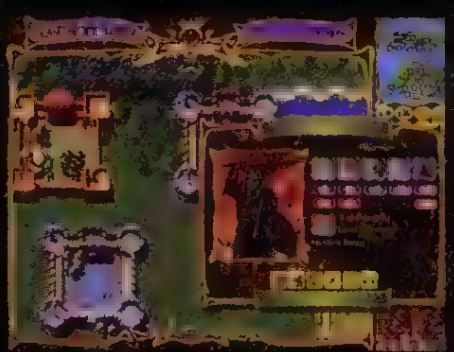

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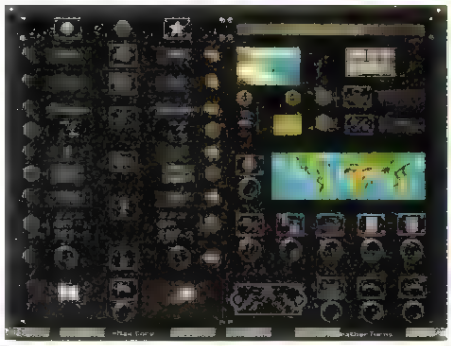
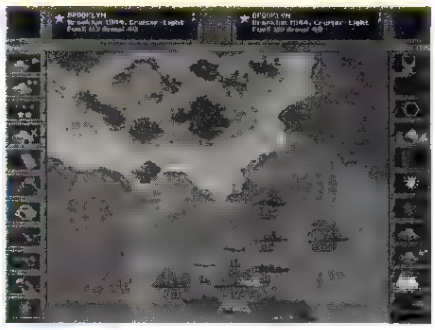
Pacific General

The Asian blitz with an island twist





[clockwise from top]

Hit the beach!

Amphibious operations requires all armed branches of the service

Special Operations button for carrier-based air units

The Battle Generator makes almost anything possible

This last offering in the *Five Star General* series centers upon the titanic struggle between the Japanese empire and the Allies during World War II. Campaigns and scenarios will vary in scope from the enormous conflicts fought within the continental vastness of Asia and Australia to the smaller (but no less important) battles that raged upon the many tiny Pacific islands and atolls. Unfortunately, *Pacific General* does all this while maintaining the same fuzzy-wuzzy unit sizes across fluctuating operational scales. In fact, its rather loose association with any actual order of battle will probably drive most historical wargamers to commit voluntary Hara-kiri. On the other hand, the innovative and simplistic approach to this gigantic conflict has much to offer game players who have managed to ignore the vagueness around this particular aspect of the series design.

If your first experience in the *Five-Star* series was with the highly praised *Panzer General*, you may recall what a visual joy it was to review your vaunted legions with their many campaign ribbons and battle honors that emblazoned them with glory. Sadly, this feature has apparently become a casualty of a game design evolution which has opted for a more drab and utilitarian unit-viewing interface. Purchasing and upgrading units has also taken on a confusing air, with the many toggle switches and buttons rendering it more of a encyclopedic chore than the pleasant snap of previous outings. Also missed is being able to see how many core and auxiliary units were available for purchase during a campaign.

Migrating to Windows 95 and DirectX has provided some niceties, but overall *Pacific General* doesn't really deliver all that much more in terms of game features than did its predecessors. Oh sure there are the video clips, the weather animation, and the streamed music – but so what? When those features are disabled, it's unlikely you'll feel deprived.

With a heavy emphasis on the naval war, *Pacific General* has expanded many naval warfare features that were previously handled on a cursory level. Naval gunnery ranges for the smaller island scenarios are increased by a range multiplier to allow shore bombardment to be depicted more realistically. Aircraft carriers have a special button for handling carried-based air unit operations. Submarines can submerge and may evade enemy destroyers and can torpedo an enemy capital ship. Warship damage is a combination of strength losses (kills and wounds) and critical hits which may randomly disable a ship's combat or maneuvering capabilities. Partial ship repair is also possible during each sub-campaign.

Plenty of scenarios, a couple of tutorials (one land and one naval), and the campaign game are all included. For the Japanese, the long hard road of conquest begins in 1937 with the campaign in China. The Allies will begin their campaign with the Battle of Midway in 1942. A robust battle generator allows you to choose from over 30 pre-made maps, including many from the *Panzer General* and *Allied General* companion sets, along with a host of different nationality options. Customized scenarios may lead to banzai charges at the gates of Moscow or even kamikaze attacks in the Mediterranean. The possibilities are almost endless.

A new spin on combat tactics introduces the "massed attack," which gives your units better combat results when you have maneuvered several formations next to an enemy unit before executing combat. Units can also be upgraded with a more dynamic set of special abilities or technologies like Fearless, Kamikaze and Bunker Killer as they become available. In fact, the game abounds with a variety of new and different unit types that enrich the various unit classes.

While *Pacific General* does an adequate job of depicting this struggle within the simplistic *Five-Star* design scheme, it's hard to say the series has concluded on a particularly high note. If you're like many and have had your fill of wargaming lite with this series, maybe we all can now look forward some new designs from SSI that will hit closer to the historical realism target. *–Mark McIntosh*

★★★½

Pacific General

SSI • www.ssionline.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 players, Internet, LAN, modem, PBEM, hotseat

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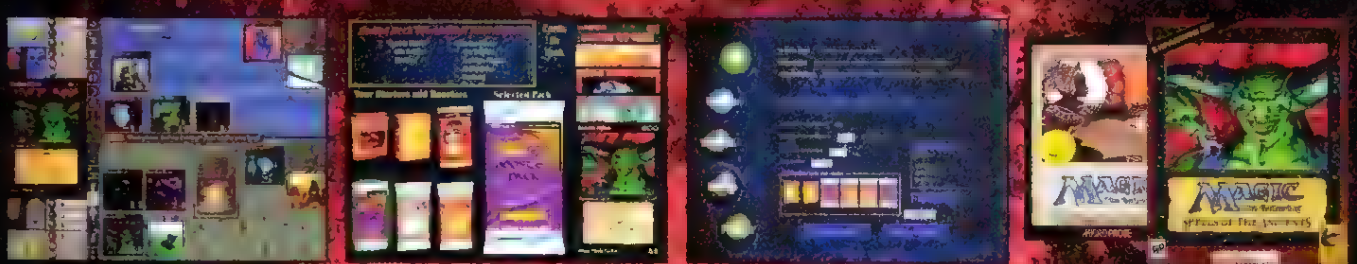

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Birthright: The Gorgon's Alliance

A true diamond in the rough

[clockwise from top] **Here's where the Gorgon hangs out; The adventure environments look nice but the character graphics are lacking; If diplomacy isn't your thing, there're plenty of provinces to fight!; Inspecting the troops**

These days, it's all too common to bring home a professionally produced game with slick, state of the art graphics (after being lured in by a huge marketing budget), only to find that the gameplay is severely lacking. Birthright is just the opposite. Its graphics vary from wonderful to atrocious, it lacks overall polish, but it contains great gobs of gameplay.

The struggle for *The Iron Throne* is at hand, and your task is to act as regent of one of the many realms of Anuire. You must unite the empire against the Gorgon, a malevolent entity set on world domination ('natch). The game is based on a world built by TSR for AD&D play. Highly recommended as a mood setter and to familiarize you with the game world is *The Iron Throne* by Simon Hawke (ISBN # 0-7869-0357-0).

Suggesting you read a novel in order to get more out of this game is indicative of the entire experience. *Birthright* is a challenging game to love. It'll take some time, some effort, and downloading of patches before you get fully comfortable here. The manual is sparse, and you'll rely heavily on the in-game help system, and perhaps on the forums at Sierra's web site, where lead designer Bob Clardy enthusiastically fields all questions.

Clardy is a designer in the mold of Gary Grigsby and Norm Koger. Though *Birthright* is on store shelves, he is not in any way finished with it. At least one big patch (which includes new features as well as bug fixes) should be available by the time you read this; a character editor (allowing you to create your own regent to play with) is already available for the cost of a download; and a Deluxe Edition of the game is planned. Think of *Birthright* as a process.

So what is it? *Birthright* is effectively three products in one. The overarching game is an empire building strategy game, played on a map of Anuire. Within the context of vying for The Iron Throne, you'll drop into a real time strategy battle game and a first person adventure crawl (either of these can be played stand alone, as well). The empire building portion excels, the real-time strategy is good, and the adventure portion has some serious flaws. Let's start with that.

As an option in the empire game, you can send a few hardy adventurers on a quest. This is played out in a gorgeous first person 3D environment with lousy creature graphics and horrid voice acting (you can see where funding ran out). The interface is rather clunky, with the biggest problem being that your party travels in single file. This means the wizard at the back of the line can't use his spells on an enemy directly in front, since all he can see is another party member standing in front of him. There are other issues here, too, but the truth is, the adventure module is best avoided for now (and avoiding it does not seriously detract from the overall game experience).

The real-time battle game uses a grid system, as well as a mostly eye candy 3D battlefield (you can use this to control units as well as, but the grid is much easier to manage). Each unit represents a formation of typical AD&D soldiers (elvish archers, dwarvish infantry, goblins...that sort of thing). As a module that you drop into from the empire building game, the battle game is quite good. You get results quickly (though the AI can auto-resolve battles if you wish) but there's enough decision making that your input matters.

Then there's the crowned jewel, the empire building game. Skip the basic and advanced game, run through the excellent tutorials and go right for expert. Your two main resources are gold and regency points. Accumulate the former through taxation, trade or tribute. The later comes from the innate ruling ability of your regent or as a byproduct of the vastness of your empire (whichever is less). Use these resources to build an economic empire and buy your way to alliances (for once, you can honestly win a game through diplomacy) or follow a more martial plan of conquest. Barter trade holdings for magic sources. Demand tribute, build roads, forge ley lines (magic conduits), cast spells, assassinate leaders... the range of options is enormous.

Birthright is a product on store shelves but still in development. If that sort of situation bothers you, skip it for now and wait for the *Deluxe Version*, which should be more stable. RPG fans should certainly not buy this game for the adventure portion. But if you're a strategy gamer, *Birthright* might be the sleeper hit of '97. The quest for The Iron Throne is a seductive one, indeed. *–Peter Smith*

★★★½

Birthright: The Gorgon's Alliance

Sierra • www.sierra.com • Requirements: DOS, 75 MHz Pentium or higher, 8MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial

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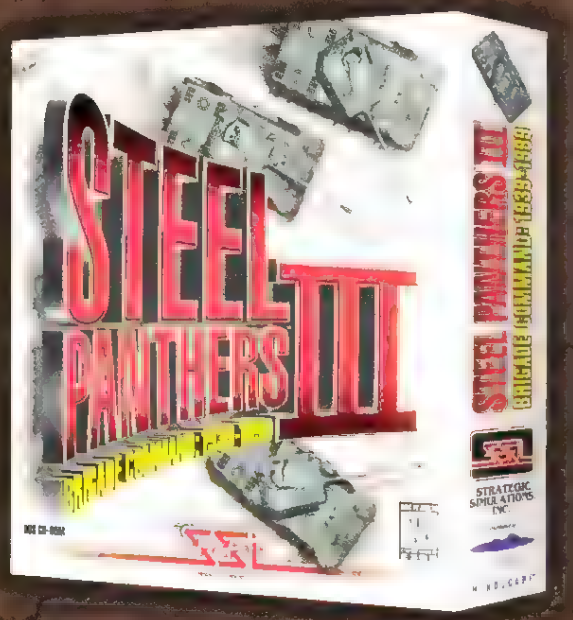

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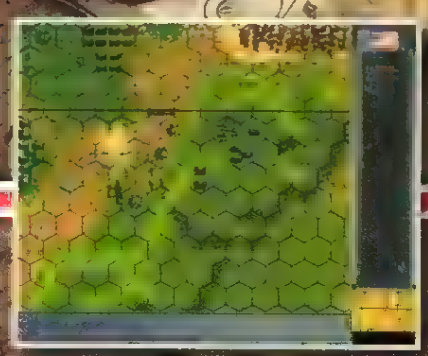

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Dark Colony

Humanity hits a roadblock

Dark Colony has several strikes against it before you even open the box. Its subject matter is a hackneyed human vs. alien confrontation; it's one of a million new games with the word "Dark" in its title; and it's a real time strategy game at a time of real time strategy excess. These initial clues suggest a derivative, mediocre effort that's hardly worth playing. Surprisingly, though, the clues are misleading; while *Dark Colony* is indeed derivative, that's its only major flaw. It's a well-crafted, highly engaging strategy title that's just different enough from its precursors to provide a fun playing experience.

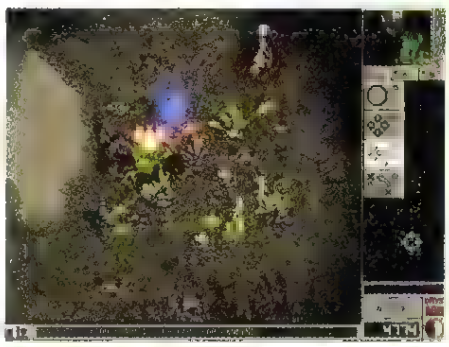
Dark Colony's premise is simple: while terraforming Mars for colonization, humanity hits a roadblock in the form of bug-eyed, tabloid-style aliens. These aliens (called the Taar) are looking for a few good worlds to call their own, and don't want any pesky humans underfoot. The result, naturally, is full scale war.

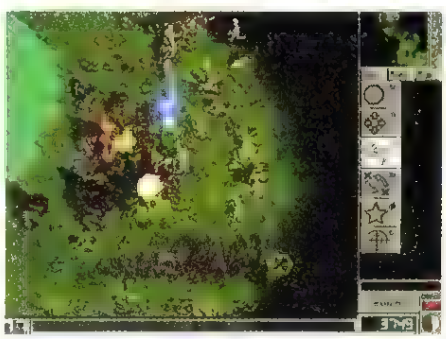
While the futuristic setting of *Dark Colony* suggests a *Command & Conquer* clone, *Dark Colony* is modeled very closely on *Warcraft II*. Like *Warcraft II*, *Dark Colony* features a relatively small selection of combat units (only ten per side) for the player to build. These units are large, distinctive, and well animated, and can be upgraded over the course of time. They're also extremely similar; as in *Warcraft II*, each side of the conflict has different looking but fundamentally identical units.

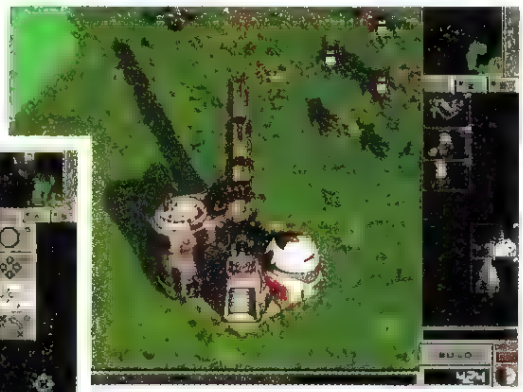
There are a few subtle differences that set *Dark Colony* apart from *Warcraft II*. Instead of building sprawling colonies, the player builds his base on a single terraformed plate. Instead of gold mines, there are gas vents that a vehicle reminiscent of *Command & Conquer*'s Tiberium harvester must exploit. This gas (called Petra 7) is the game's only resource. In a novel twist, these gas vents erupt periodically and without warning, forcing the player to scramble to keep a constant lookout for new eruptions.

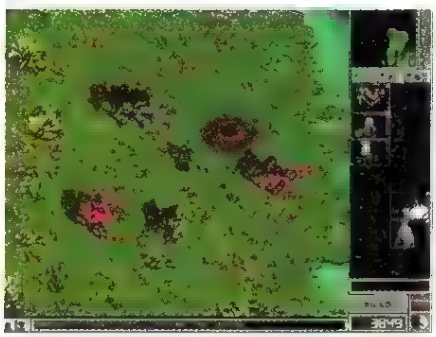
Another interesting innovation is the day and night cycle that's in effect for every outdoor mission. During the day, humans have a higher visibility range, while the Taar have better vision at night. Thus, the time of day has real tactical significance: Humans want to plan their big offensives for daytime, while Taar tend to strike at night.

Whether you choose to play the humans or the aliens, a commander appears in every campaign mission. This commander is the only unit that is transferred from one mission to the next. He gains experience as he racks up kills, and thereby increases both his rank and abilities. He can "inspire" nearby troops to make them fight better, and can occasionally call for reinforcements. When the commander is reduced to dangerously low health, he's beamed away to safety so you needn't worry about losing the mission just because your commander got killed









(clockwise from top)

Your entire base is built in one spot, minimizing sprawl

Your commander (center) appears in every campaign mission

Battles tend to get hectic

Night falls on the battlefield, giving the aliens an advantage

The game makes nice use of allies, neutral units, and scattered bonuses. On several campaign missions you'll have an allied force to work with, and be pleasantly surprised by its autonomy. Allies *aren't* just stationary targets in this game; they're genuinely useful, and they make the game world seem that much more real. Neutral units such as alien creatures and hidden alien artifacts also help to add interest to the game world. Digging for artifacts becomes an important part of several late-game missions.

Some players will be disappointed with the relative lack of unit variety, both in terms of sheer numbers and in the fact that both sides' units are mirror images of one another. This is a definite downside, but on the other hand, it allowed the game to be balanced very finely. Campaign missions are entertaining and challenging, seldom allowing an easy victory or presenting an insurmountable challenge.

Ultimately, players' reaction to *Dark Colony* will be determined by their attitude toward the old complexity vs. playability debate: should game designers add complexity (more units and structures) to their games, or instead strive for simplicity and elegance? Many forthcoming real-time strategy games have taken the complex route, larding on tons of different units and features. This sort of variety can be delightful when well executed, but in all but the most carefully crafted games, it quickly becomes self defeating. Instead of commanding a few unique units, each with its own distinct character and role, the player is presented with an overwhelming mass of possibilities–none of which are particularly distinctive or fun.

For better or worse, *Dark Colony* chooses to stick with *Warcraft II*'s simple elegance and adds only a few legitimate innovations. The formula stays largely intact, save for a radical change of scenery and a few welcome improvements. Fans of cutting-edge game design and endless variety will find little of interest here, while those looking for a formulaic but well-crafted real time strategy game will be greatly entertained.

–Joe Grant Bell

★★★★

Dark Colony

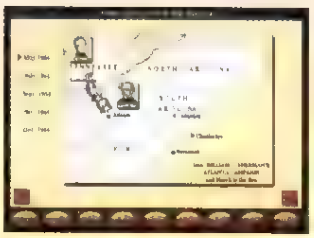
SSI • www.ssionline.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 100 Mhz Pentium, 16 MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, null modem, modem, LAN, Internet

WAR IS HELL.

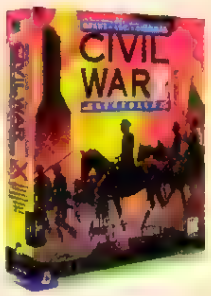
(ALTHOUGH WITH THE RIGHT GAME, IT'S ALSO SORT OF FUN.)

How do you outgun a great game like *Robert E. Lee: Civil War General*? With *Civil War Generals II* you can now command Confederate or Union Armies. And you can put yourself in the boots of Lee, Grant, or Sherman as you attempt to rewrite history.

Civil War Generals II comes combat-ready with 40 legendary battles from both the Eastern and Western theatres. But if you want to wage your own wars, use the map editor to create terrain, armies, and commanders. Then go online to test your cunning in head-to-head battles.



This war isn't just hell. It's history. And you'll experience it as never before with an insightful new collection of Mort Künstler paintings and all-new multimedia mini-documentaries on the men, weapons, and tactics of the Civil War.



SIERRA

www.Sierra.com

FROM THE CREATORS OF ROBERT E. LEE: CIVIL WAR GENERAL

Imperialism

"I'm an imperialist at heart"

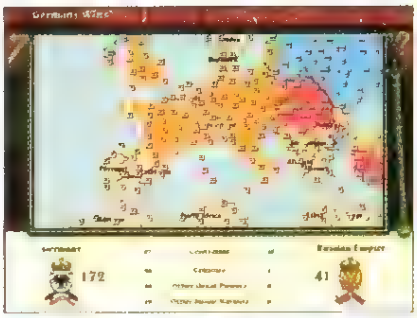
It had to happen, work eventual y calls. In comes a game for review, and the games played "for fun" have to be set aside. With much grumbling and longing to get back to *X-COM*, the game is installed and started up Work through the tutorials and start up a full game. The first dozen or so turns seem uninteresting, repetitive, vague… then boom! Hours have passed unnoticed, *X COM* is forgotten, and a new favorite is found in the form of SSI's *Imperialism*.

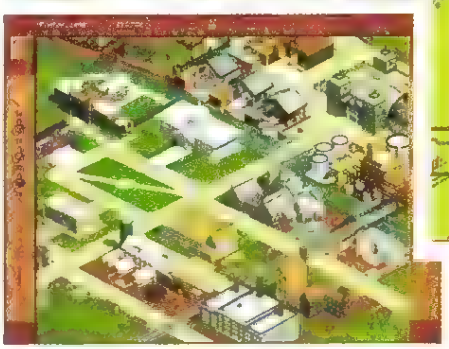
It was tempting to subtitle this review "big nations behaving badly," but aside from the fact that a very similar subtitle ran a cou ple of months ago, it's not entirely accurate. In *Imperialism*, your goal is to become *the* preeminent imperial power in this fictional or historical recreation of a 19th Century world, but un ike previous games of this type, you don't necessarily go about achieving this goal through the "bad behavior" of military conquest; while that is certainly an option, diplomacy and economics play important roles in your quest, and the application of power in these realms (along with military) can lead to your being declared vic tor in the Council of Governors. Gameplay is perhaps best described as a mixture of *Civilization*, *Empire*, and the old SSI game, *Colonial Conquest*; while the specifics are different, the addictive "just another turn" nature of all these games exists in *Imperialism* in spades.

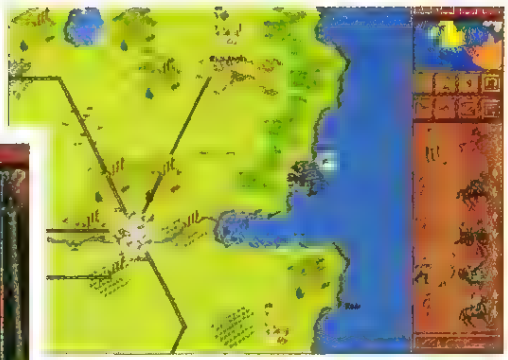
Your first goal is to build up your econom ic infrastructure, something quite beyond the usual resource gathering of this sort of game but much simpler than the economics of an actual business sim. The centralized nature of your economy may not be entirely "realistic," but it speeds up gameplay and involves less busywork than specifically managing all your cities' output. Developing your transportation network – the key to your economic power is an activity you must balance with your other endeavors.

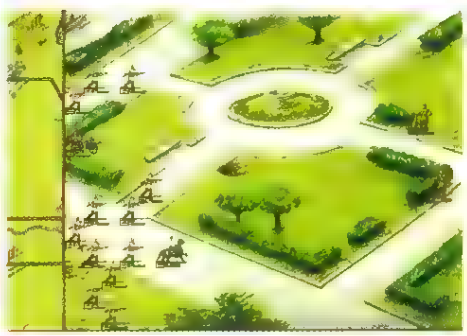
Perhaps the most innovative part of the game comes in its portrayal of diplomacy. While you can use military might to con quer surrounding nations, you can also use diplomatic muscle to sway nations and even to bring "minor nations" into your empire. Set up embassies, establish trade subsidies or boycotts, and give foreign aid (*i.e.*, bribe their kings). Aside from establish ing influence over other nations, diplomacy effects your trade relationships which in turn effect the materials and goods offered to you on the international market; when you start the game you can almost bet your lands don't supply everything, so trade is vital to expansion.

Military power is still a prime part of









[clockwise from top]

There Germans are ready to land a "killer stack" to take London and knock England out quite early in the game

A tactical battle; some my "killer stack's" units are advancing on the left, to be met by two of London's four defenders on the right

Your capital city. The various buildings represent segments of your industry

You don't have to take the world to win; instead, you can be declared victor by the Council of Governors. For some reason, Austria-Hungary, which up to this point was being decimated by the Germans, sided with Germany instead of Russia

Imperialism, especially in the mid- and end-game when most of the minor powers have been absorbed. As with other factors, you have to balance the growth of your ground and naval forces with that of your civilian and diplomatic empire a fine pickle of a problem when you're in dire straits in both areas (the time when *Imperialism* is at its best).

While the game is in general loads of fun, there are a few weaknesses. The graphics, while pleasant, tend to be somewhat bland; units especially disappear into the background art on the strategic map. Your empire can get cumbersome to manage as it gets large; a few interface improvements would have helped here. The tactical battles, which make *Panzer General* look complex, are repetitive but you'll want to fight many of them as the calculated or "Otto play" (love that pun!) options can lose fights that should be won. The computer is not terribly aggressive, especially in the later portions of the game, and players can leave their empires largely undefended and mass "killer stacks" that easily chew through computer-held territories. The biggest flaw in terms of gameplay is that taking a nation's capital knocks it out of the game; a few sneak attacks against (particularly) computer play ers and you've cut your time-to-empire drastically. Perhaps something like the result of the Franco-Prussian War (wherein the Prussians took Paris but only kept Alsace-Lorraine and a chunk o' change) would have been more challenging either the loser could quit or make huge concessions to the victor and stay in the game in reduced form.

But all these complaints (except the "knock out punch" tactic) are really just irritants and not show stoppers. Even the feared "lack of replayability" doesn't develop; despite the repetitive nature of your (rel atively few) actions, starting a new game session starts the addictiveness all over again. There's something about games where you expand your territory that keeps you coming back; the economic and – espe cially diplomatic extensions *Imperialism* adds to the typical military mix only make this empire builder all the more entrancing.

★★★★☆

Imperialism

SSI • www.ssionline.com • www.imperialism.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90 MHz Pentium or higher, 16 MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM; MacOS, System 7.5.5 or higher, 80MHz PowerPC or higher, 16 MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-7 players, LAN, Internet

Cannon Fire: Gettysburg

A splendid little wargame

Cannon Fire: Gettysburg is the next evolution of .. By Design s no frills *Musket Fire* engine of 19th Century combat. Yes, the entire game is still contained on one 1.4 meg floppy. And yes, ...By Design has still managed to pack a ton of game in that small space.

Gettysburg covers the second and third day of the battle, including night turns. As in *Musket Fire*, the play is roughly on a brigade level with half hour turns. Veterans will be familiar with the formations of line, column, and all around.

By far the most impressive improvement seen is the system's AI. Not only is it much stronger when on the offensive, but the actual parameters of how the computer calculates strategy are adjustable. The user can alter how easily the AI will go on the attack, the general strength it will commit during attacks, and the distance it will pursue enemy units. Predefined opponents based on the tactical styles of noted Civil War generals are included. These virtual personalities tend to live up to their historical counterparts very well. It's exciting to see that Lee's strategy of double envelopment on the second day may have worked if he still had the tactical genius of Stonewall Jackson to coordinate attacks.

The graphics, though not up to TalonSoft's standards, have been given a strong facelift. Elevation changes are now easier to distinguish, there's greater variety to the terrain and objects on the battlefield, and units can now be displayed in two different sizes and there're two levels of zoom-out for the map.

Lee's plan of double envelopment may have worked if Stonewall was there to execute it

There is still room for improvement. Commanders are limited to aiding morale and the unit's ability to melee Unfortunately, command organization is not addressed, and there's little incentive for keeping related units together. Skirmishers are not present and *grognards* so inclined may begin grumbling.

Shiloh and *Chickamauga* are the next in this excellent series and should be available shortly. ...By Design only sells direct and may be reached at 800 527-7472, or by e mail at DesignInc@aol.com. *-Chuck Klimushyn*

★★★★

Cannon Fire: Gettysburg
By Design, Inc. • Requirements: MacOS, 68040 or higher, 4 MB of RAM • Multiplayer: Two-player, e-mail or hot-seat

Dragon Dice

Rollin 'dem bones with Smaug and 'de boys

When TSR invented *Dragon Dice*, they wasted no time convincing Interplay to create a computer version of the game. At the same GenCon the physical game was introduced, Interplay was showing an early build of the their version. Unfortunately the game never really took off, and the computer version is destined for as ignoble a fate.

Basically, *Dragon Dice* is a strategy game that uses dice as armies. Each die has icons representing missile, melee, magic or shield points, and one declares the type of attack, rolls his army, and then counts off the appropriate icons. The defending army is rolled, and shield icons are counted to offset the offensive icons. Casualties are taken in the form of losing some of your dice. That, in a nutshell, is what the game is all about.

The campaign map. This is just a holding tank for separate battlefields

At its core, Interplay's *Dragon Dice* models the physical game well. Unfortunately, the underlying game is obfuscated by having dice morph into caricatures; by battle scenes which replay inevitable results, and by hairy arms shaking and rolling the die, as if jiggling the mouse and pressing a button can give the same visceral satisfaction as slinging real dice. Interplay would've done much better if they'd kept the game simpler and spent more time polishing the user interface.

Dragon Dice is not a complex game, though it seems to be hard to explain on paper. The computer version includes tutorials to get you started. Between these and playing the game, you'll quickly pick up the rules. If the designers had been more concerned with giving you solid information, and less concerned with goofy graphic effects, this benefit would've been even stronger, but even as it is, *Dragon Dice* (the computer version) does make a good learning tool for the real thing.

There's nothing inherently wrong with *Dragon Dice*. It just doesn't warrant such a full blown treatment, or a full blown price ($54.95 street). Rolling virtual dice just isn't as appealing as rolling the real thing. In much the same way that card games often don't translate well, once you take away the social and textural pleasures of *Dragon Dice*, what's left just isn't that engaging. *–Peter Smith*

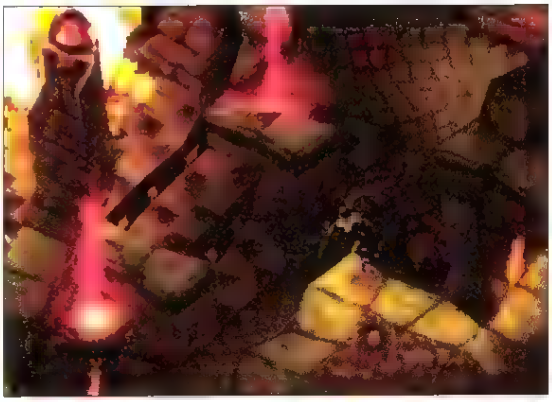
★★½☆☆

Dragon Dice
Interplay • www.interplay.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 486 DX2/66 or higher, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 4 players, LAN, NetBIOS, modem

Dungeon Keeper

Climbing down the corporate ladder

Such a peaceful haven, this land before us. Bumble bees leap from flower to flower, coveting nectar for the sweetness of honey. Clouds, white and wafting, dance ever so lightly above the hillside, while the sun brings eternal warmth to the cities below. Hurry, minion. We *must* destroy the pungent aroma of cheer before it gets any ... I shudder to say this ... better.



top to bottom

When raging fury meets claws of steel, these Dark Mistresses are on a permanent PMS high

Large, square rooms offer the best efficiency rating

In a touching scene from Rocky VII, Bile Demons practice their jabs for the next big fight

The first six

Eversmile presents little more than a speed bump en route to global conquest. Make a basic dungeon as directed, then fortify. For cackles and screams, try the Possess Creature spell out, particularly the fly with his compound vision (great for scoping out Evil Mistresses). When intruders from above ground (knights, and a few tunnelers) arrive to inspect your walls, the army of Beetles and Flies should handily defeat these puny paupers who dare to assault the Keep.

Cosyton offers feeble resistance, and not much more. Get familiar with the newly introduced training room, as it will be a staple for every forthcoming level. Expect to train aggressively in all scenarios. Resistance to the growth of your empire stems from the fortress south of the starting position. Train Demon Spawn enough to make use of their acidic spittle. Remaining out of sight for a substantial length of time bodes well for a lopsided battle in favor of your horde.

Some call the town of **Waterdream Warm** a dream come true. If so, then it's about time to change the sheets, ain't it? Establish the Keep and fortify once again to the south. With the newly christened Library, research can now take place, albeit in limited operation (only the Call to Arms and Speed Creature spells are researchable at this point). Remember to balance training with research for the Warlocks that arrive, and continue constructing rooms to code (*i.e.*, build them square, at least 5 X 5, light on the spackle). Expect hardier forces from the fortress, including Dwarves. Luckily, any Warlocks trained beyond their initial levels have ranged attack. Avoid dropping them directly into the impending fray; instead, drop them near the fringe of battle, so that their distance spells will work without sustaining heavy damage from enemies nearby. Direct curiosity expeditions towards the west, where a nice, friendly, yet dead couple will join up with you.

Flowerhat. Even its very name brings vapors of nausea well before the sight of it inflicts stomach spasms. As with any army, the creed "Hurry up and wait" remains the de facto advice. With the forces of evil cut off by lava from the punier forces of good to the north, speed has little or no impact on this scenario. Utilize wait time to train everyone to maximum, building large rooms and attracting every possible creature through the Portal (scantily clad Beetles near the entrance sometimes do the trick). When ready, build a bridge across the lava to the northern side, taking out the opposing archers quickly before they damage your forces. With success hinging on a constant advance, rather than defensive posturing, fortifying your Keep shouldn't be a top priority. Thrust forward into the hero's dungeon, using the standard paratrooper methods discussed earlier. Several goodies lie within the enemy Keep; the one farthest north bears lasting impact on the subsequent scenario.

Formidable resistance to the unholy yet satisfying cause of worldwide pain begins at **Lushmeadow-on-Down**. While the former levels were but fodder in the face of cunning tactical prowess, this scenario pits Keeper against Keeper, with only a slight edge towards yourself. Boiling down the prerequisite for success, look no further than east. Without compromising the construction of your Keep, make it your first priority to ferry expeditionary Imps north towards the prison, then east to grab the Increase Level bonus. Should the other Keeper obtain this first, chances of success dim with every passing minute. Being matched so evenly, a war of attrition without the Increase Level bonus virtually guarantees defeat. Let's give a nice centigram of applause to the newly enlisted Bile Demons, all-purpose units with strong ties to the underworld (and whose horns give them the versatility to receive both VHF *and* UHF signals).

In order to turn **Snuggledell** into Snugglehell, steps must be taken to uproot the northern Keeper whose evil resources rival your own. Storming the center island offers a wonderful opportunity to appease the sadist in everyone (admit it, you didn't buy that Weed Weasel for landscaping purposes). The plentiful veins of gold lay scattered across the level. For this reason, several smaller treasure rooms near each gold mine seem more appropriate than a centralized room far away from the bullion action. Power-ups stashed away in the map edges make victory easier; inversely, they can also distract from the more pressing goal of pummeling the enemy's Dungeon Heart into a

[top to bottom]

Nothing quenches the thirst like "Ugh water"

The "Torturers" in concert. No mosh pit required

Putting lairs next to a portal provides easy access for monsters to their accommodations after the long flight in

island surrounded by lava and impenetrable stone harbors your forces. Grab this opportunity to construct rooms, train minions, and torture friends and close family members. Speed plays a larger role in success; make every possible effort to avoid concurrent warfare from both the east and west. By eliminating one threat, the opposing threat becomes far more manageable. Even after victory, search around the extremities of the map for some future assistance. Scarce pockets of gold mean managing resources wisely, at least until a team of Imps can shuttle across the lava canal to secure more.

Tickle? A town called Tickle?!? Revolting, isn't it? For once, players begin the level away from the horribly exposed center of the map. Create and fortify north and east of the starting position. Given that the local competition set up shop within mere blocks of each other in the upper corner of the map, create a hidden tunnel directly north to a rich vein of gems. With any luck, this activity shouldn't expose your covert build-up. Armed with the Conceal Creature spell, send in a team of invisible Imps to gobble up the enemy's rooms. If possible, focus on the takeover of crucial areas, like the Portal, Library, and obviously the Dungeon Heart. Once finished overrunning the enemy Keep, continue to advance right through the Hero's Palace. Not only does this prince of purity hide a twisted passion for observing citrus mating rituals (You thought "Sunkist" was *stamped* on the rind? Tsk, tsk . so naive), he also holds the keys to a hidden kingdom.

One does not conquer the land of **Moonbrush Wood**; one *harvests* it. Pitted against four Wizards of fairly equal strength, make camp right near your starting point. Braced against the safety of the map edge, construct the standard dungeon fixtures. Once confident in the abilities of the amassed horde of creatures under your control, begin a series of surgical strikes. Lash out against each Wizard individually. Follow a pattern of attack, overwhelm, rest, repeat. Unless in dire straits, make heavy use of capturing to convert the more formidable foes.

Best of all, a grand opportunity to procure a Horned Reaper arrives during this level. Coddle it with its own lair. Pamper it by playing Poultry geist to keep it digestively appeased. Coupled with the Transfer Creature power up, the near future will look a little less bleak once "HomeR" enters the picture. Whatever happens, *don't* slap the Reaper. For one thing, it looks bad in public. More importantly, even the slightest brush of your knuckles will send it into a frothing rage.

Up until this point, one could go about the business of dungeon design without limit. Perhaps **Nevergrim** is precisely the wake up call needed. This struggle of two powers, against both themselves and the elements, resembles an epic clash of Titans across the vast ava sea. Toss efficient room design right out of the Portal, because there's simply no possible way to efficiently design. Just build. Fast.

Numerous possibilities for success are available. One can quickly assemble a minuscule coffer, then send an expeditionary force of Imps across the lava to disrupt the enemy Keep. After that, it's just a matter of dropping minions behind enemy walls. Even if the attack fails, the fiscal ramifications seriously deplete enemy resources. For good measure, always grab the power ups "hidden" along the usual map edges (think of it as Hide and-Seek with the most unimaginative friend you can think of).

Before it's all said and done, **Hearth** will give you the Hearthburn of a lifetime. Slammed from all sides by several waves of heroes, the level becomes more a "persona achievement" race than a battlefield during the initial stages. Train, Research, and repeat liberally. Even then, the first assault will come unexpectedly, and with stunning ferocity. If you found any Transfer Creature power-ups from the prior level, you'll be kissing yourself in gratitude (don't get too fresh). Without grabbing the power ups towards the west of your central starting point, you'll find it almost impossible to achieve the wanton destruction true Dungeon Keepers expect of themselves.

Make a point to continually cycle through every battle in progress (and there will be several scattered in all directions). Supplement your troops with healing and speed spells, and make a point to keep track of your imps lest they scurry off to be skewered by a stray arrow or two. Once the waves of heroes have been repelled, breathe a few sighs of relief. After that, search the four corners for helpful power-ups.

Let's see the townsfolk of **Elf's Dance** dance after their precious town's ablaze with living fuel. With a full year's supply of heroes to the south, and the "Dungeon Twins" to the east and west, the situation paints itself to be pretty grim. The toughest part comes from choosing *which* strategy to employ. The impenetrable walls surrounding the different regions make reinforcement a matter of appropriately placed doors. Bait the heroes to the south, then lead them into the enemy Keeper's magically delicious void.

When ready for the offensive thrust, construct bridges towards the side, rather than the center, of the enemy Keep. Utilizing a classic pincer maneuver, Imps can be shuttled in from the east and west beachheads, claiming land to allow the 666th Airborne Division to slip in underneath the radar. When the rival Keeper lumbers out of his powder room, greet him with a Lightning Trap or two. Once the majority of his forces have fallen, seal up the entranceways leading to the Dungeon Heart, then drop creature after creature inside. Thumping on the Heart enough should make the Heart stop thumping... forever.

The second six

Gazing upon the serenity of **Wishvale** can quickly unravel the fulfillment of a lifetime of unpleasant memories. Stop the Sanity! Sandwiched between both good and evil, make a stand for neither. Once again, an

realms to bludgeon each other. Or, skirt around the edge of the map to surprise the enemy Keepers, then take out the Happy Heroes Home southward. Beyond that, the standard invisible Imp coupled with the paratroops tactic is always a winner with the ladies.

The third six

The keepers of **Buffy Oak** have stopped fighting amongst themselves to take on a common enemy. Bummer that enemy had to be *you*

Your assigned dungeon's a pre-built, which has its advantages. Take the luxury of additional time to reinforce against the natural lava barrier. Defense will be the initial objective keep primarily to yourself. The only exception would be to entice the Dragons across yonder lake to stop by for some tea and combat. Remember: They like lava, so outfit their own personal realms with the latest lava lamp technology.

Like a castle siege, the first sign of war will be the bridges. The eastern Keeper, who we'll call "Manic," takes a much more aggressive stance to your existence. Claim his bridges, then knock off the front and back. Voi a! *Gilligan's Island* meets Dante's *Inferno*, and Mr. Manic can't do a thing about his waning army. The other Keeper, "Depressive," kicks into action after his buddy bites the dust, so contain (but don't destroy) Manic until ready to face his comrade

Heroes, and Keepers, and Wizards, oh my! Brimming with goodness and uncooperative evil entities, **Sleepiburgh** treats you once again to a two-some (luckily, one of them just likes to watch). Expect to see pr'or technologies disappear from sight as part of a clause in the Dungeon Union of Night Gremlins contract. The Workshop must be captured, not built, from the south east corner. Once again, make certain that contact with the enemy occurs between one, not both, of your northward enemies.

Of greater importance than ever, selling yourself (and your dungeon) to potential minions means pushing for bigger and better rooms. Intelligent use of the Scavenger Room to attract the "right type of clientele" will go a long way in keeping the enemy corridors bare, and yours teeming with the pungent scent of nasty creatures.

By now, setting up the dungeon and reaping the first fruits of your Graveyard should be as autonomous as looking both ways before scratching. With that in mind, the initial ho-hum stages of **Woodly Rhyme** offers no new challenge. Bu.ld, fortify, and keep to yourself as the quiet guy on the block who never harmed a soul. Then murder your neighbors for being stupid.

Do everything to maintain a strong wall of defense just inside of the huge lake. Money is plentiful, so train to the hilt While the lower enemies pose a considerable threat, the middle fortress could only be described as "Freddy's Fun House." Traps, tough enemies, and other nightmares make any standard entrance impossible. Make good use of the Destroy Wall spell to find an alternate

Running DKCalc.exe here shows the wizards goofing off. Time for a little slap session on their heinies

route into the compound

Blitzkrieg! If Mohammed won't go to the mountain, then kill him and keep the mountain for yourself Such is the strategy for **Tulipscent**. Though a more passive stance can certainly be molded for success in this level, take the opportunity for in'tiative as a great excuse to bang a few heads That is, assuming you did make good use of the Transfer Creature power up in the prior level Just beyond the southern door lies a Keeper who'd simp y love to entertain your "guests." Without some activity to keep them occupied, they're prone to just cause troub.e anyhow. Though rov'ng bands of heroes may harass you in this endeavor, surgically removing the Keeper from its lair should be all the medical attention requ red. Sew him back up, nurse, and let's move on

Members of the **Mirthshire** PTA have officially declared you a "meanie." It s important then, to thank them improperly. Only the chairman of the bored need be extinguished, the rest of the collective body can just go to Hel.... vetica font if they can't read the writing on the wall spelling doom for their land.

To make matters even more unfair, school's out for several of the available technologies (wave bye bye to the Heal spel) Scramble quickly towards the gold seam, sending imps out and slapp.ng them for peak efficiency. You may wish to hold off on open'ng any of the Portals until the advent of sufficient facilities. Priority number one for this level is entrenchment. Any breach in security will send wave after wave of heroes nto your keep, ensuring a quick defeat After that, relax, build up a ghastly horde and bus them over to the Lord of the Realm for P E

Out of sight, out of mind. A healthy dose of stealth keeps the neurotic heroes of **Mistle** at bay. You'll need to keep out of sight, carv.ng paths up and around, but not quite into, the central arena. Make sure to set the prime directive to capture, since you'll need all the higher level creatures you can muster from exploration and battle. Use teenage invisible ninja Imps to branch out across the edges of the map. One great trick involves carving an alley east to west across the lower section of the map. .f attacked, clever use of boulder traps across this line of death should weaken the proverbial bowling pins mounting an attack against your happy home. Mop up the survivors, placing them in your torture room still writhing from the horror of seeing ghastly colored bowling shoes above their prone bodies

Two more for bad measure

One can almost smell the fumes of apocalyptic conclusion by now. With **Skybird Trill**, the f'scal quarter reports tell a gloomy tale. Lock up the training room and conserve every penny, making a point of scavenging cash off the corpses of the fallen enemy. With fierce competition from every corner of the map, the best advertising comes from larger rooms and factory authorized rebates. Treat your scavenger room like gold itself. Get those minions in, even if you have to be *gasp* nice to them. Remember: you can slap them into oblivion later; there'll be Heaven to pay once they sign.

If the marketing blitz works, the three opposing Keeper's dungeons will echo with the ho low sounds of their masters' anguish. Send the animals out two by two (by two by two), claiming the other Keeps, one by one, n the name of good old rock and roll. Early momentum determ nes success of failure, so hit the ground running, and don't buckle at the bottom.. keep going lower.

Put the *AC/DC* tape on continuous play. Set phasers on "Pulverize" (*i.e.*, kill, don't capture). The time has come: Good vs. Evil. Paper vs. Plastic. Snoopy vs. Beavis (do *not* to forsake Beavis in his moment of triumph). Four precepts for success are: Train, train, train, and train Stock up on Imps, working the gem mine for max mum cash to you guessed it – train. Fortify the entire southern region, after which your well trained hordes should be ample to rid the middle Keep of its handful of ferocious guards at the southern entrance.

Oddly, things settle down for a bit after that, with the central dungeon strangely empty Enlist the help of tentacles to capture the Avatar, but do not kill the Angelic Worm he'll only regenerate stronger than before. Capture him, bring him home for some torture time-out, and spend every waking moment reinforcing walls for the largest onslaught of frenzied heroes you'll ever face in the game. Nothing but traps, fortified walls, and surviving a brutal attrition war will suffice. When the music dies, and the throngs of people leave the building, consider yourself a true Dungeon Keeper if you're still standing on the dance floor, the Avatar and his minions littered among the balloons and blood red streamers. *-Tim Royal*

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X-COM: Apocalypse

Sim City 2084: Managing Mega Primus

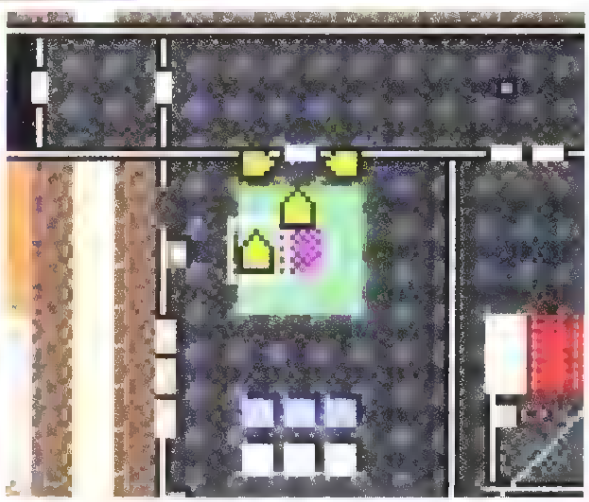
If you thought it was hard saving an entire planet in *X-COMs 1* and *2*, wait till you see what you're in for with just a measly little city to defend in *X-COM: Apocalypse*. This is easily one of the longest games on the market, making those piddly little 50+ hour RPGs look like a flash in the pan. You can spend your valuable *X-COM* gaming hours learning things the hard way (*i.e.*, doing them wrong, cursing loudly, and then reloading an earlier saved game) or you can take a shortcut on your way to the alien dimension by letting the following tips guide you.

Scientific method

One of the first orders of business is to get a jump start on research. An early purchase of a second base will insure that you have breathing room once things get crowded in your initial base (your first bottleneck will most likely be your Living Quarters). By concentrating your research in another location, you can build the base with an eye towards defensibility: make sure the access lift (which is where attackers will enter) is flanked by security stations to intercept any intruders. Your research base should include a token force of defenders, preferably androids, since they're more formidable while they're still rookies. A second base will also guarantee you have the available real estate for the larger advanced labs. You'll also want to immediately build an Alien Containment facility so you can start research on live specimens. Note that although the UFOpaedia implies aliens can die in containment, this isn't the case. Also, there's no reason to have more than one of each specimen or to keep specimens you've already researched.

You might also consider some re-engineering on your original base. Duplicate whatever rooms you have around your access lift and once they're built, raze the originals and replace them with security stations. This is especially useful if you plan on raiding any of the criminal organizations, which can be zealous in their retaliation.

There are two reasons to conduct raids. One reason is defensive: a bankrupt organization won't be able to attack your base. But raids are also valuable for the loot and experience they'll bring you, especially early in the game when they provide a much-needed financial leg up. The procedure for defensive and looting raids is very different. On defensive raids, your goal is to inflict as much damage as possible: shoot everything. Incendiary munitions are particularly useful for destroying as much stuff as possible. Each item has a dollar value, from furniture to shrubbery to walls. Once the mission is completed (all hostile units are dead, fled, or unconscious), the total damage will be assessed against the organization's bank balance. You can check an organization's balance in the UFOpaedia. Once this number is negative, they will be unable to attack you.



When going through doors in turn-based missions, make sure your agents have plenty of TUs. Flank the door with two men and send one to open it, leaving a fourth man to bring up the rear

Defensive raiding is a more effective measure against hostile organizations than attacking buildings from the cityscape. First, the collateral damage won't anger non-hostile groups (for instance, all those fragile people-mover tubes belong to Transtellar, who doesn't take kindly to having to rebuild them). Second, most organizations boast a fleet of armed vehicles that respond like angry wasps, spreading even further the collateral damage and likely taking out a few of your valuable vehicles. But most important, raids are a great way to build experience for your rookies, since combat experience is much more effective than in-base training.

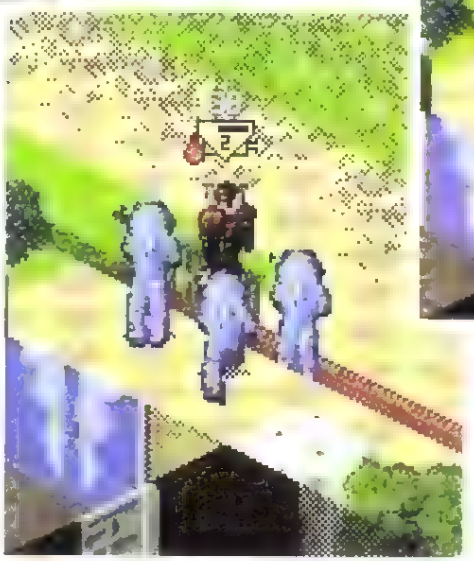
The pyrotechnic nature of defensive raids, however, makes them less profitable. Explosions and fires destroy the goodies you would otherwise take back to your base to sell or use as your own. Looting raids should be conducted with more finesse: avoid using high explosives or incendiary ammo. Your goal should be a near-surgical removal of your enemies, leaving their property and possessions intact. The Temple of Sirius is a shoo-in for looting, since they start off hostile and they don't seem inclined to retaliate. They also don't have the advanced weapons of the criminal groups, who are also candidates for looting. Furthermore, some of the criminal groups can be useful: Psyke is the only buyer on the lucrative Psiclone market and Diablo sells incendiary grenades, which are less cumbersome firestarters than the autocannon. You should avoid hostilities with some organizations at any cost, because of the side effects: Transtellar's cooperation is needed to bring in new agents, while the Mutant Alliance and S.E.L.F. are required to make android and hybrid agents available. Megapol will help fight UFOs during incursions if they're friendly. Otherwise, many of the organizations are necessary for the items they'll buy and sell. Organizations will automatically acquire more advanced weapons over time, so do your raiding often and early to fund your initial development and train your rookies.

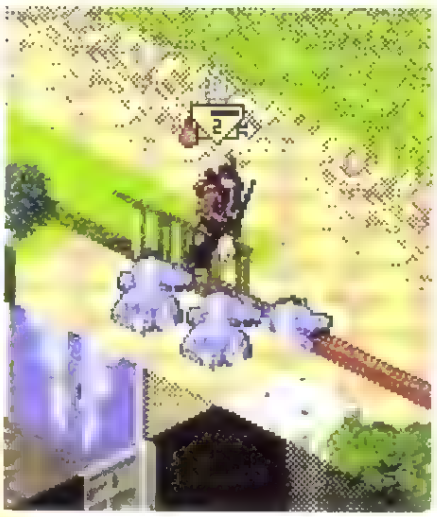
Bio-Transport-Modules-R-Us

Another important early source of income that shouldn't be overlooked is your workshop. Keep your engineers busy manufacturing sellable items. Ultimately, toxiguns are the most profitable items to build, in terms of work hours/dollar earned. But until you've researched them, you should build Bio-

◀ A unit with lots of TUs and minimal encumbrance can work wonders with a Power Sword

Note the before and after pictures when pitted against three anthropods ▼ ▶





Transport Modules, Devestators, and Disruptors as they become available. If you can hold out, stockpile manufactured goods and wait until the beginning of a new week to sell items. This will give you through the next week to sell more goods, because once you dump a quantity of goods on the market, the price will drop at the beginning of the following week

In terms of base maintenance, periodically check to be sure that agents are assigned to training (arriving agents are unassigned by default). Also, check the skill levels of your scientists and engineers against their colleagues for hire. It's unlikely you'll ever be able to employ every available scientist, so make sure you've taken on the best man/woman/android for the job: don't let those skill 95 scientists languish in the "for hire" pool while you're paying yahoos with skill in the 60s

The biker gangs of 2084

An early challenge in the game is fending off UFO incursions before you develop advanced weaponry. You can stymie these unwanted visitors with Hoverbike swarms. Buy a half-dozen hoverbikes and arm them with the best weapons available, preferably lineage plasma cannons, but Janitor and Prophet missile launchers are also effective. Even Bolt 4000 Laser Guns are preferable to the 40mm Auto Cannons, which do little more than annoy UFOs Buy SD Sports engines for the Hoverbikes so they can reach incursions more quickly and dodge incoming shots more effectively. If there aren't enough SD Sports engines available, resort to the time-honored practice of scavenging: buy Phoenix Hovercars, strip their SD Sports engines, and sell the gutted bodies.

Once your Hoverbikes are tricked out, set them for aggressive attacks at high altitude and concentrate them on one target at a time. Although it's easier said than done, using waypoints to approach a UFO from different directions will minimize friendly fire incidents: coordinate approaches from the overhead map with the game paused. You can further ensure the longevity of your frail Hoverbikes by sending a bigger vehicle out with them. UFOs will attack the larger vehicles first, so a Valkyrie Interceptor set on Defensive attack mode will soak up the attacks while your Hoverbikes work their magic. Hoverbike swarms remain effective until Type 7 UFOs with multiple launchers appear on the scene; at this point, shielded Phoenixes substitute nicely. During vehicle combat, move damaged vehicles to lower altitudes. Once a vehicle is heavily damaged, duck into a nearby parking garage for the duration of the fight. Otherwise, an attacking UFO will just chase it down for the kill.

You won't be able to shoot down every UFO, so watch closely from the cityscape view to see where transports beam their passengers A prompt raid on that site will keep the organization's infiltration percentage down. If you lose track of UFO activity, you'll have to investigate each building in an organization to reduce infiltration levels. Although some organizations may not seem worth saving ("Who cares if the Gravball League is taken over by evil invaders from another dimension?"), there is a complex web of interrelated diplomacy at work behind the scenes: a chain reaction can begin with the fall of a seemingly innocuous group.

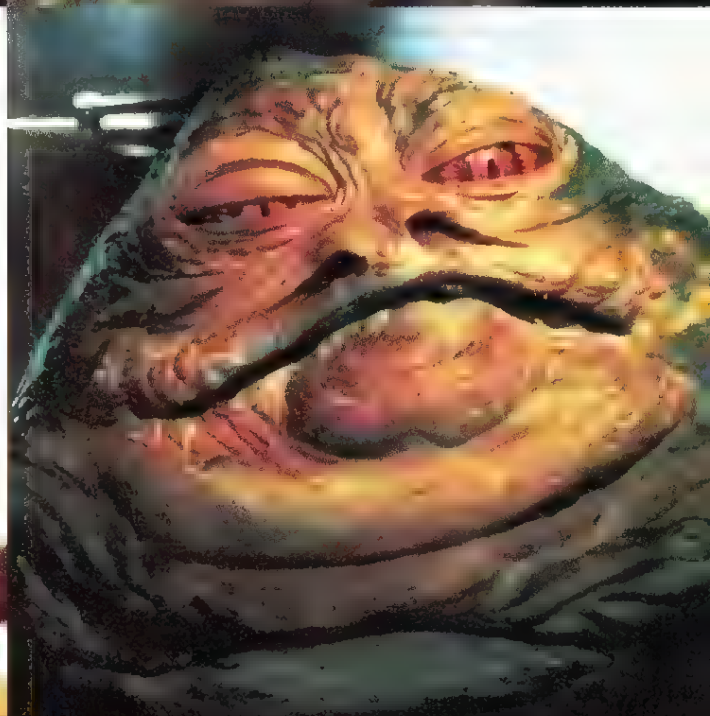
It's tempting to hunt down hostile vehicles ("How dare they drive around my city?"), but the only effect is to reduce the enemy organization's bank balance by the value of the vehicle. Defensive raids are a far more effective and profitable way of accomplishing the same thing without damaging the city in the process. Weapons Controls will pay for themselves over time by improving accuracy and thus reducing collateral damage and the funding and diplomacy penalties that follow. Pay attention to the occasional "Illegal flyer detected" message. This means that Megapol has picked up an unauthorized vehicle; most of the time this will merely be someone hostile to Megapol, typically a crime orgnaization out for a Sunday drive. But this can also serve as an early warning of a base attack that might be prevented by shooting down the offender.

X-COM 101

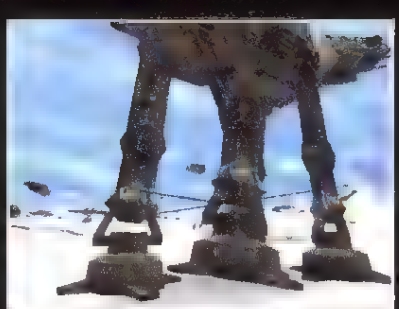
Training at the base is free development for your troops, but you get what you pay for. For every four hours spent in Combat or Psionic training, there's a percentage chance that the trainee will gain a single point in a given attribute. The percentage chance is

Tactical Point Value

Rookie	10
Squaddie	12
Squad Leader	14
Sergeant	16
Captain	18
Colonel	20
Commander	22
Chrysalis	3
Alien egg	4
Brainsucker	4
Hyperworm	5
Multiworm	8
Spitter	8
Popper	8
Anthropod	10
Skeletoid	14
Micronoid	15
Megaspawn	30
Psimorph	30
Queenspawn	50



You're Dash Rendar - quick on the trigger of a blaster.



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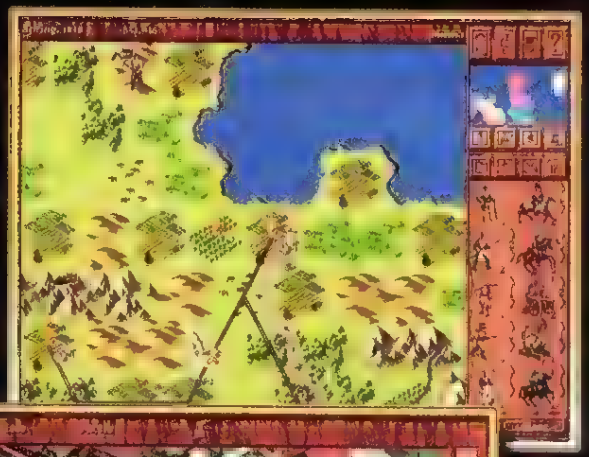

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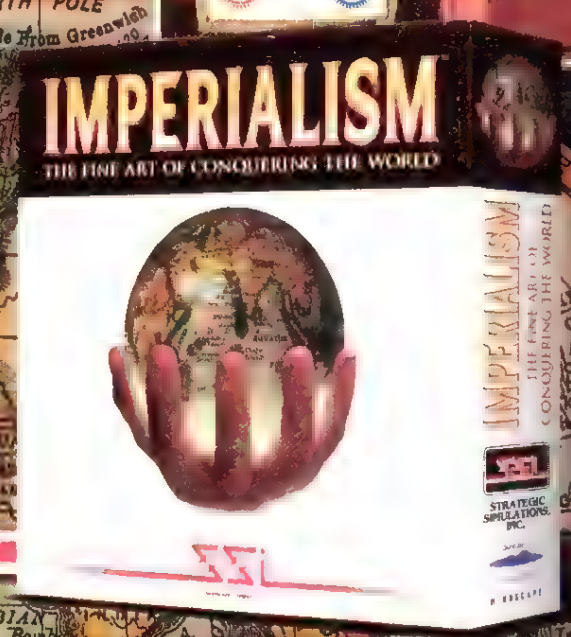

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reduced as the attribute rises (rookies have more to learn than their more experienced cohorts). With the exception of Stamina, which can reach 200, attributes are limited to a value of 100. Psionic attributes can never be greater than three times their initial value, so don't hold your breath waiting for someone with an initial psi-energy of 25 to train past 75. Attributes will rise much more quickly by using them during the tactical missions, which will account for most of the improvement your agents enjoy.

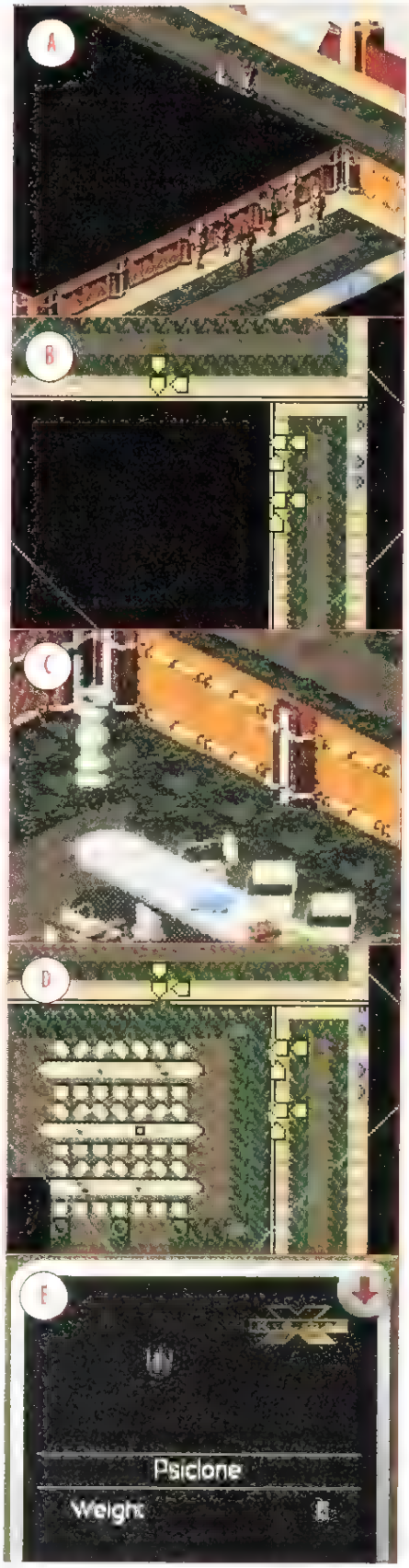
Your daily evaluations will give you a good indication of your progress. The total of all your tactical mission scores is added to a point value assigned to the week's completed research. Each Alert automatically costs you 30 points. Each UFO that makes it back to the dimension gate costs you 1/4 of its point value, while destroyed or crashed UFO's (regardless of who actually shoots it down) add their point value to your score. You lose the point value of any of your own vehicles destroyed.

Just another bug hunt?

The tactical missions in *X-COM: Apocalypse* have engendered a disagreement that makes the Lincoln-Douglas debates look like a slap fight between teenage girls: is real-time or turn-based combat the way to go? Although both styles of play have their advantages, most players will stick to one or the other throughout the game. In deciding which mode is best for you, keep in mind that tactics vary significantly depending on which you choose.

In turn-based games, Poppers and Brainsuckers with their ample TUs are deadly. In order to minimize casualties, the turn based player will have to adopt overwatch tactics almost religiously: never end your turn without at least one agent set to Aggressive mode with a healthy store of TUs and a respectable accuracy (here's where kneeling with a Laser Sniper Gun comes in handy). When you've got only a handful of Rookies, effective Reaction values will be rare. Make sure your "reactors" hang back to cover the rest of your squad; resist the temptation to use them offensively. Early in the game, high Reaction values are almost as precious as high Psionic values later in the game; these characters should be carefully protected.

In real time combat, overwatch tactics aren't as vital, since your agents will stop and fire or take cover whenever an alien appears. And since TUs aren't the limiting factor to an agent's firing rate, double-fisted gunners are well-worth the reduction in accuracy, making up for stray shots with increased firing rates. One of the drawbacks to real-time combat is that hand to hand weapons like Stun Grapples and Power Swords are virtually useless. A fast character armed with little else than a Power Sword can be quite a boon in a turn-based game, where he can zip around and hack away with impunity.



Rather than using doors, which is just what your opponents would expect you to do, enter unseen areas (A and B) by blasting holes through the walls. Creating entrances from multiple directions (C and D) will give you a nice crossfire on anyone inside. Note the "candy" lying on the table in the middle of the room (E)

"I'm Hudson, sir. He's Hicks."

Sometimes it seems that all your agents look alike, especially when they're all tucked into the same armored suits. It can be helpful to change their names to help you keep track of who's who. Since your agents' names aren't readily displayed during the tactical missions, you might consider names based on their portraits for easier management (name the bald guys Picard or Savalas, name the androids HAL or Ash, name the women MacPherson or Anderson, name the dread locked guys Marley or Tosh). It can also be useful to give agents a prefix based on their role: SNP for sniper, ASS for assault, RCN for recon, for instance.

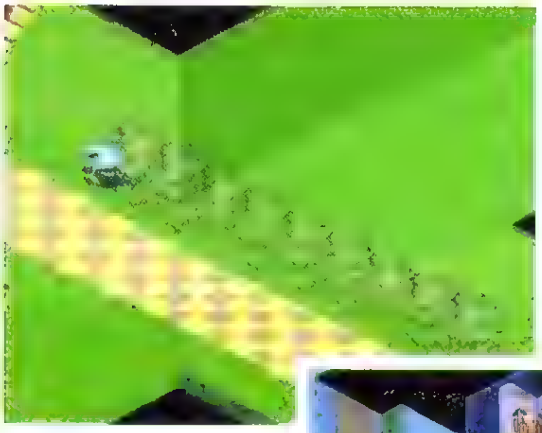
Group your agents into squads to organize and keep track of them. A balanced squad might include a machine gunner on point, a close-assault agent with an Auto Cannon, and two support troops with Laser Sniper Guns and respectable Reaction values. Over the course of the mission, use the squad grouping to shuffle your men and keep track of who's going where and covering whom. Without a "Next Agent" button, dividing agents into squads is the best way to make sure you don't neglect to give someone orders. As your men spread out, try to make sure each squad has a Medi kit. A critically injured agent will bleed 1 health points every three seconds in real-time missions or 4 health points per turn in turn-based missions; having to cover too much ground to staunch a wound can result in needless fatalities.

During base attack missions, each security station will occupy four of the 36 available troop slots. If you then have more scientists and soldiers than available slots, the remaining slots will be divided based on their ratio to one another. So if your scientists outnumber your soldiers by too much, then you may find yourself virtually defenseless if a research-oriented base is attacked.

Lock and load

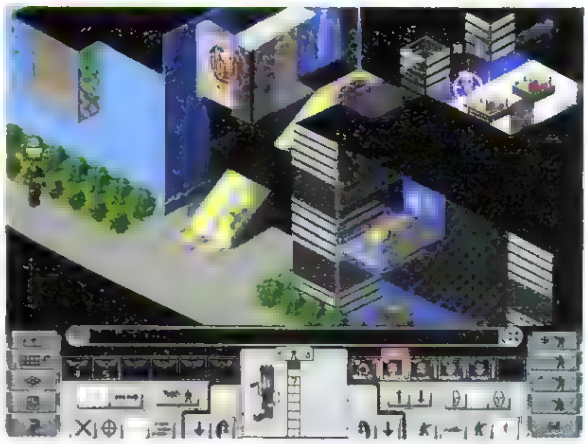
Arm your troops wisely in the beginning, when you can't just load everyone up with hi-tech weapons. To the stronger agents should fall the burden of the heavy Auto Cannons (and Launchers later on), particularly since firing incendiary and high explosive rounds doesn't exactly require pinpoint accuracy. As you load your agents down with equipment, you can see their TUs drop, especially the weaker guys; your androids make great pack horses for Medi-kits, High Explosives, and spare grenades. Troops with high accuracy will benefit most from higher accuracy weapons like Laser Sniper Guns. Note that injuries reduce an agent's accuracy, so keep your snipers out of harm's way to keep them effective.

The M4000 Machine Gun with its rapid rate of fire shouldn't be overlooked, especially considering that accuracy isn't very important in close-quarters combat: a stream of snap shots is sure to hit an adjacent target regardless of accuracy. This is particularly



◀ This is a much scarier sight in turn-based missions than it is real-time missions

▼ Long range situations like this call for something less destructive than an Auto Cannon with HE rounds. Remember that this spitter can alert all other aliens to your presence even if it doesn't have a line of sight



valuable during turn based missions, where a machine gunner can use up TUs moving adjacent to an alien and still get plenty of shots in. Also, since the only way to improve skills during combat is to use them, a Rookie spraying machine gun ammo is more likely to improve his accuracy than a Rookie squeezing off the occasional HE round from his Auto Cannon. You can hold down the mouse button while the targeting cursor is over your target to rapidly fire multiple shots.

Every agent should carry Smoke Grenades, particularly in turn-based missions when priming and dropping a smoke grenade can save the life of some poor schmuck caught in the open with no TUs. Between missions remember that while your agents will automatically re-stock their ammunition, you'll have to manually replace used grenades. Bracketing grenades will ensure that a target is within a blast radius: intentionally throw one grenade long and a second grenade short if you don't trust an agent's throwing accuracy. Agents in Marsec armor make great high-altitude bombers: they can fly over their targets and drop multiple grenades with precise accuracy and no TU cost (don't forget that blast radii extend vertically). When setting Proximity Mines and Boomeroids, note that each square is 1.5 meters. Non-detonated Proximity Mines will be recovered after a mission, so use 'em if you got 'em.

Short, controlled bursts

Every onscreen item has a dollar value that the site's owner must pay if it's destroyed. Every mission has a damage tolerance level. Note that killing civilians or letting them die (they seem predisposed to run through fire) counts against this damage tolerance. If the tolerance level is exceeded, the organization's diplomatic stance towards X-COM will drop and a comp aint might be made. When you're responding to an alert, the damage tolerance of a site's owner is pretty high, so you have more freedom to trash the joint. The main disadvantage of getting explosive happy is the destruction of goodies that you might have otherwise captured; equipment doesn't fare too well against fire and explosions. Early in the game, it's important to capture artifacts for research and higher-tech toys to replace your starting weaponry, so avoid the fireworks if you can. Dropped equipment shows up as purple dots on the overhead view, so you can work around it in some cases.

Fire isn't nearly as lethal to your agents as it looks. An armored agent can easily walk through burning areas without taking damage. However, a commonly overlooked side effect of fire is the collapse of roofs and catwalks. Falling debris or holes suddenly opening beneath your agents are more dangerous than standing in flames.

Running is almost always the best mode of movement since missions tend to be short enough so that stamina isn't a problem. For turn-based missions, running agents will have more TUs left over after movement for reaction fire. When an agent's stamina drops below 10, either he'll move more slowly (real-time) or his TUs won't fully recover from turn to turn (turn-based). Going through doors or around corners should be done en masse in real time games and with a full reserve of TUs in turn-based games. Shooting through doors and walls will allow multiple agents to simultaneously enter an area regardless of the number and width of doorways (after all, this is how SWAT teams do it). Power Swords make excellent machetes.

Sitting tight

Don't be too eager to ferret out your opponents; *X-COM: Apocalypse*'s aliens tend to be pretty aggressive. If you can secure an area and set up killing zones, you can reduce your own casualties and wait for the bad guys to come to you. This is especially important in close-quarters sites, such as office buildings, apartments, and slums. Check first to be sure of where the map edges are, as these are secured flanks. Then start moving to secure other areas. Send out scouts with high TUs and Marsec armor to peer through windows or check hallways. Snipers taking high positions can be helpful for seeing oncoming aliens and picking them off. Once you've got a good idea of your immediate surroundings, you can probably determine the direction from which aliens will approach. Kneel behind cover and consider having some characters hidden along the flanks of the approach. Note that Spitters see psionically, so they don't need a line of sight to spot your agents. They will also transmit your agents' locations to all other aliens at the site. Later in the game, as you start going up against the more lethal weaponry, it's almost suicidal to not wait for the aliens to come to you.

In order to improve your agents' attributes through combat experience, you have to use the attribute. Let your agents use reaction fire whenever possible. Psionics can be improved by making sure you probe an enemy at least once a mission. After a tactical mission, each agent earns an individual combat rating based on the number of kills scored (see chart). If a Rookie's combat rating exceeds 8, he's automatically promoted to a Squaddie. Otherwise, promotions are handed out to the first five agents with combat ratings of five or greater, depending on the number of a given rank your team already has. For instance, Squad Leaders are promoted to Sergeant if 1) they have a combat rating of five or higher, and 2) there is a shortage of Sergeants. To be specific, if Squad Leaders / (Sergeants +1) > 2, a Squad Leader with a combat rating of five or higher will be promoted to a Sergeant. A similar formula is used for each rank. Agents also earn medals based on the number and value of kills they've accumulated.

The debriefing at the end of the mission awards your team a combat rating consisting of the total point value of all the opponents you killed. A psionically controlled unit gets full credit only if it's controlled when it dies (*i.e.*, if you cancel control after a controlled alien drops a grenade, but before the grenade detonates, you won't get credit if the explosion kills the alien). Explosions or falling terrain caused by X-COM give full credit for any kills. If one of your agents is brainsucked, double its point value is subtracted from your combat rating and assessed against your casualty penalty. The combat rating at the end of the mission is the base value for the score of your tactical missions, which is used in your daily evaluations and ultimately used to determine your funding.

And finally, the most important bit of advice comes at the beginning of every mission. "Don't get hurt" - heed it well. *–Tom Chick*

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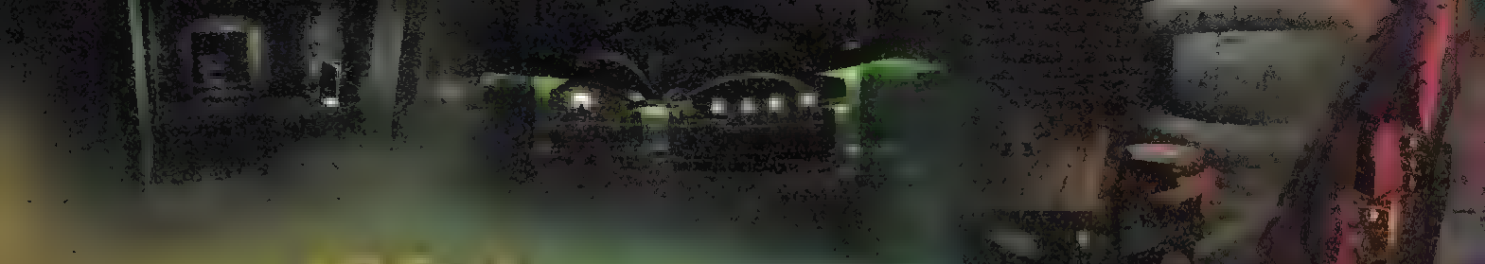

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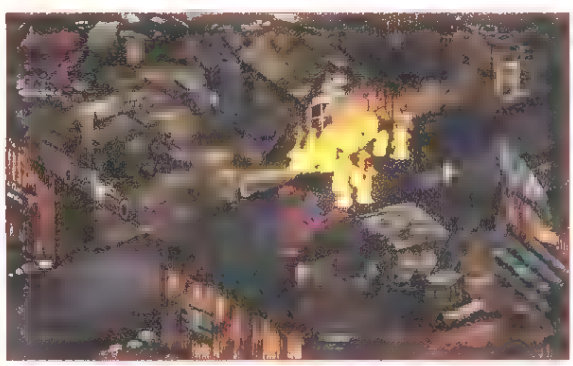
Cheat Thrills

Give me violence and give me death



[top to bottom]
As if it needed it, there are patches to make Carmageddon even more gory

The killing gets up-close and personal in Half-Life

Postal tries to be controversial with its violent content, but seems to wimp out when it comes to motivation. Or maybe the "big secret" of the game is that you really are insane

We ran a letter a few months back from someone complaining about the violence in games and ads. The number of letters we received could probably be summarized by the statement, "Get a life. I like violence. It's only a game." Yadda yadda yadda.

Well, I like violence too. Lots of it. Ooey, gooey, rich and chewy violence. With bows on. Give me aortic ruptures, bursting spleens, broken bones, severed limbs, gratuitous disembowelments (are there any other kind?) and decapitations. Lots of decapitations. With oodles of blood spurting every which way.

Why the love of violence? Am I a violent person? Not in the least bit. I grew up in a bad area of Los Angeles (an area now referred to as the "inner city") and had a first-hand chance to see the wonders of gang violence and crime. I managed to avoid most of it (one of the advantages of being bigger than the other kids).

Violence is ultimately the easiest form of conflict to simulate in a computer game – imagine an action game of interstellar diplomacy rather than interstellar conquest, death and destruction. However (didn't you know this was coming), I want violence with repercussions. Violence with meaning. Violence with context. I want a heavy feeling of depression if I kill a good guy and experience the adrenaline rush of killing the ultimate personification of evil (or vice versa if that's the premise of the game).

The upcoming game *Postal* has a premise that effectively cheeses out when it comes to explaining the motivation of your character. From their web site: "[*Postal* is] about a character who goes postal when he uncovers a sick and twisted conspiracy that drives him to defend humanity from pure evil… or is it something else…" Why not let the player be completely psychotic? Why not enter locations and gun down completely innocent civilians (a la *Carmageddon*)? Why not make that the point of the game (which is not the point of *Carmageddon* unless you want it to be)? You get more points for the innocence level of the victim (extra points for newborn infants).

In *Postal*'s defense, the "or is it something else" leaves the door open for a possible outcome that says, "Oh, this was all in your head. You really are a psycho," which would be a wonderful ending. But you'll probably find out your coffee was drugged by some evil bad guy bent on creating an army of lobotomized zombie killers. Or something like that.

As a young Bart Simpson once said to his sister Lisa, "If you don't watch the violent parts, you won't get desensitized." Desensitize me, oh wonderful game industry. Give me my violence. –*Steve Bauman*

CHEATER

Carmageddon

Type these codes during play for the following power ups

BIGBOTTOM	Damage
SUPERHOOPS	Explosive pedestrians
IGLOOFUN	Hot rod
GOGGLEPLEX	Underwater ability
SPAMFORREST	Instant hand-brake
NTHELOFT	Drugs
BUYOURNEXTGAME	Oh dear, jelly suspension
CHICKENFODDER	Bouncy bouncy
FUNNYJAM	Turbo pedestrians
TRAMSARESUPER	Pedestrian harvest
ISLANDRULES	Vesuvian corpses
SMALLUDDERS	Giant pedestrians
SPAMFRITTERS	Free repairs
GIVEMELARD	Money bonus
SPAMSPAMSPAMSPAM	Immobile pedestrians
IHAVESOMESPAM	Gravity weirdness
MOOSEONTHELOOSE	Pinball mode
RUSSFORMAR O	Pedestrian electro-bastard ray
RABBITDREAMER	Jupiter gravity

Meat Puppet

Type these codes in during gameplay.

~INGESTH	Full health
~INGESTA	Full ammo
~INGESTW	Full weapons
~INGESTE	Full energy

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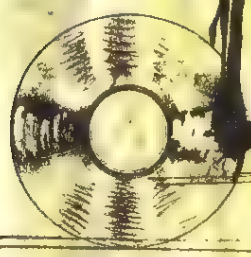

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Atomic Bomberman

An old friend turns ugly

clockwise from top

The blue guy got trapped in a corner

The classic palette – note the death animation on the left

Near the start of a game

For those who've played the original booting up *Atomic Bomberman* is like running into an old friend on the street... and finding he's hooked up with a cult. Sure, it's the same person, but beneath the surface, something's just not right.

The original *Bomberman* (circa 1989) came out on the NEC TurboGrafx-16 platform. Though the object of the game was to blow up your opponents, developer HudsonSoft still managed to keep the game cute, and gameplay was simple enough that anyone could grab a joypad and join in. It was the kind of game that both die-hard players and non-gamers could enjoy together.

And some of that is still true The 1997 version keeps the same basic gameplay You run around a maze dropping bombs which detonate a few seconds later, sending tongues of flame down corridors. Certain wall sections will be blasted away in the explosions (sometimes leaving a power-up behind) and in this way you sculpt the maze around you. The ultimate goal is catch your opponents in bomb blasts and so be the last surviving player.

Interplay decided to modernize the system, though, and tragically, the cuteness has been replaced by attitude and sophomoric humor. Ironically, the side of the game box is marked "For ages 6 and up." while the back boasts of "a vast repertoire of spiteful canned and custom taunts." The Bombermen now have abrasive voices, and berate each other constantly, their babble punctuated by the occasional farting sound (no, you can't turn these off). Yup, this is the perfect game to give a 6 year old a head start on being a poor sport. Add to this the need for a Pentium processor and 150 megabytes of hard disk space for a medium install (under which gameplay still stutters while audio files load every so often) and you start to wonder what's up

Gameplay has been "enhanced" by adding more power-ups than the game ever needed (note to game designers: more is *not* always better) and thus complicating play The fact that the game is still fun should be seen more as a tribute to the original design than as kudos to Interplay's team

However, the greatest tragedy is the lack to TCP/IP support, an expected feature that would've made the game a must have. This was apparently yanked at the last moment, since such support is printed on the box but covered over by a small sticker. Internet play *is* listed on the box, and the assumption was that this meant that Engage (Interplay's affiliated online game service) would support the game, but a recent visit to Engage's website turned up nothing. IPX, modem or a cluster of hands around the keyboard will work.

Bomberman has always shined brightest in multiplayer mode, but the fact is most gamers will be playing solo. The included AI will put up a good fight too good. It never seems to make a mistake, and you'll often see an AI player find the one safe square in a huge conflagration of bomb blasts. There are no difficulty settings and, worst of all, when the human player has been eliminated there is no way to cut the game short. You'll have to sit and watch the AI players continue the game until one claims victory (or, as happens quite often, they play to a draw).

The one saving grace here is the "hidden" editor (access to which is printed in the manual). With it comes a nice variety of different levels/power-up sets to keep the game fresh (and eliminate some of the voices), plus the ability to create your own. The overall feeling here is that a bunch of programmers sat down to port *Bomberman*, and just kept throwing in more and more stuff to keep themselves interested in the project. With the editor, you can throw three quarters of the "enhancements" out and play a decent game

Make no mistake, zipping around these levels trying to catch opponents in your bomb blasts is still fun, but it's a sad comment on the industry that the same basic design that ran flawlessly eight years ago on an 8-bit console now suffers slowdown on a 200MHz MMX Pentium with 64 megabytes of ram and a 150 megabyte install. And it's even sadder that the design team felt the need to discard the whimsical atmosphere in favor of a flippant edge. Dread the day they start work on *Atomic Pac Man*, who will no doubt sport a satanic tattoo and carry a flamethrower. *–Peter Smith*

★ ★

Atomic Bomberman

Interplay • www interplay.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD ROM • Multiplayer: 1 10 players (4 on same machine), LAN, modem, serial

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RP

soil-free under fire. It's not just another day in L.A. Then again, it is.

IF HELICOPTERS FAIL.

BRING IN THE NEGOTIATION TEAM.

Formula 1

3D accelerated racing for the realism-challenged

Criticizing *Formula 1* for not being realistic would be like complaining that *Doom* doesn't accurately model shotgun damage. Considering its PlayStation roots, it's not surprising that it's the only race game on the market that plays easiest with digital controllers, either keyboard or gamepad (don't bother with analog joysticks or steering wheels), but even with this limitation, the car modeling feels "right." Cars understeer in corners if you come in too hot, and power oversteer is possible if you get on the throttle too early exiting a turn.

Formula 1 includes 17 tracks and the cars and drivers of the 1995 Formula 1 season. Graphically, the game is stunning, with beautifully rendered tracks and vehicles. The game also illustrates a dramatic qualitative difference between Direct3D and 3Dfx native OpenGL software – the latter features considerably better visuals at a higher frame rate. Watch a replay of a race and the game looks eerily like an actual European F1 broadcast.

Curiously enough, Psygnosis didn't produce the "parts-a flyin'" accidents that an arcade race game should have. If you hit the wall head-on at 180MPH, it's hard not to expect more than coming to a dead stop and breaking a front wing. Another curious omission is the absence of a true in-cockpit view, which should be the preferred driving view. An over the car per spective provides a panoramic view of the action, and should be used if you're interested in winning every time – it makes threading through traffic particularly easy as you get perfect vision ahead and behind your car.

Overall, *Formula 1* is an excellent arcade game that only lacks a few of the perks we've come to associate with other competing products. Hardcore *Grand Prix 2* fans will be disappointed by its simple car model, but 3D card owners and casual race fans will find a lot to like. *–Steve Bauman*

Is it ESPN or PC?

★★★½☆

Formula 1
Psygnosis • www.psygnosis.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 120MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM, 3D accelerator • Multiplayer: None

Rally Championship

More bang-for-your-buck than the competition

Simulating the international renowned Network Q RAC Rally, *Rally Championship* delivers a lot of racing action for both the arcade and the lite sim fan. Consisting of 28 separate stages, the Q RAC Rally is a grueling event that will test the mettle of even the hardiest racer. The game gives you the option of playing individual stages against other drivers or taking on the entire race, which is a lonely experience since you're only racing against the clock.

When simulating the entire rally, you'll need to keep your car screwed together, and with a fixed time limit and a budget for each repair, you'll have to determine what is and isn't important (watch our for transmission problems). You also have a chance to set up your car for the upcoming rallies, changing tire types based on the terrain and weather, adjusting suspension height, etc. This aspect of the game adds a bit of extra interest to the rally, but it ultimately becomes more of a battle of attrition than a test of skill.

However, what ultimately makes *Rally Championship* such a winning game is its incredibly entertaining car model, which makes four-wheel drifts and controlled oversteer a breeze with either a joystick or the key board. Racing with other cars feels more like bumper cars due to the twin evils of bizarre AI and the dreaded invisible barrier on the edge of the road (for once, let us kill ourselves by ramming a tree), but it's still thoroughly entertaining.

Graphically, those who don't demand 3D acceleration will find excellent graphics with a better than average frame rate. Things move quickly enough that you won't notice the low-resolution textures used for the roads and the track side objects. A *Destruction Derby* or *Carmageddon* style visual damage indicators would have really made a difference.

Overall, *Rally Championship* is an excellent game, delivering solid visuals in an in-depth package. It ultimately provides more bang for-the-buck than such higher profile competitors as *Test Drive Off Road* or *Need for Speed II*. *–Steve Bauman*

Riding along in my automobile...

★★★★☆

Rally Championship
Virgin • www.vie.com • Requirements: DOS, 486DX2/66 or higher, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD ROM • Multiplayer: 2 8 players, LAN

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TEEN T

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ELSTAR

Cryptic Passage

More Blood on your hands?

Here's a recipe for disaster. Take a merely adequate first person shooter based on an aging engine, and create an add-on for it. Then price it at nearly 2/3 the cost of the original game, but only include ten solo and four deathmatch levels.

What are these people thinking? *Cryptic Passage* has no new creatures and no new weapons – just the levels (and for comparison's sake, the full *Blood* package contains roughly three times as many solo levels, plus a handful for deathmatching). It's hard to imagine that there aren't fourteen equally worthwhile levels available for download off the Internet.

The levels you do get are decent if quite derivative of the original *Blood* levels (instead of a moving train, you get a moving boat, and you'll still die if you jump overboard). Part of this is the fault of the designers, and part is the fault of the base material. *Blood* is really a one trick pony as far as environments go. It's still 19th century gothic, with the same corpses hanging from the same hooks and the same cloaked figures speaking in tongues.... The secret level, Boggy Creek, is a bit more interesting, as you take a boat ride around a spooky swamp. If all ten levels had been as interesting as this one, the package may have been worthwhile.

Instead of a moving train, you get a moving boat. And you still die if you jump off!

They like this moon – they use it a lot

If you really played all the way through *Blood* and you still want more, it may be time to think about expanding your horizons. But if you're seriously determined to stick with *Blood*, Monolith themselves are working on an add-on, and it's bound to be more interesting than this package. It could hardly be less. Add the lack of originality to the lack of quantity and you get a lack of desirability. Skip this one. *–Peter Smith*

★★.....

Cryptic Passage
WizardWorks • www.wizworks.com • Requirements: Blood • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, LAN, modem, serial

Soldier Boyz

Unrivaled in the area of PC shooters

Promising "blood splattering mayhem" and packaged in an eye-catching box (love that plastic grenade – give it to the kiddies!), *Soldier Boyz* screams, "I'm cool buy me now!" And for both of you unfortunate enough to do that, you'll be treated to one of the worst games to ship in the last few years, one that has no redeeming qualities. Aside from that box.

One of those full-motion video shooters that were out of fashion about a month after the advent of CD-ROM, *Soldier Boyz* tells the story of the most racially diverse group of criminals ever assembled who are released from jail and converted into a hostage rescue team. They're hired by the usual "rich man" in order to rescue his daughter, who's been captured by a Vietnamese warlord and is being held hostage (why do rich people let their daughters roam free in Communist countries?) The team needs to enter the jungle and kill lots of people in order to win the game.

The filmed bits of the game are taken from the low-budget movie of the same name, meaning the dialog is stilted and the action violent but ultimately rather limp. The original footage shot exclusively for the game consist mostly of people addressing the player with looks that scream "I'm not even getting paid a lot of money to do this."

Gameplay consists entirely of clicking on guys who are about to shoot you

Gameplay consists entirely of clicking on guys who are about to shoot you. If you click before they fire, they die. If you fail, you get to replay the mission over and over again until you've memorized every location another bad guy will pop out from. Nothing is ever randomized or changes, so replayability is nil. As if you'd replay the game...

The box says, "unrivaled in the area of PC shooters," which is, for once, a true statement – no current shooter is nearly as bad as this game. *Steve Bauman*

"NO STAR" Rating

Soldier Boys
DreamCatcher Interactive • www.soldierboyz.com • Requirements: DOS, 486 DX2/66 or higher, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

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www.microprose.com www.worms2.com

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We regret to inform you
that your son has died in
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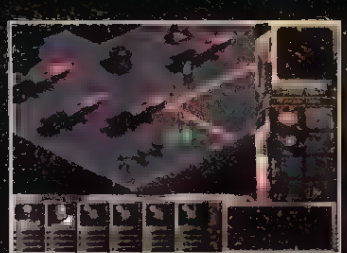

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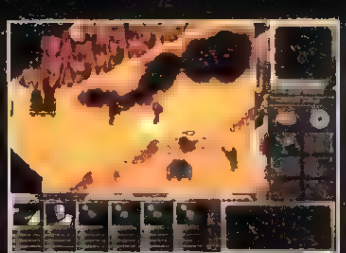

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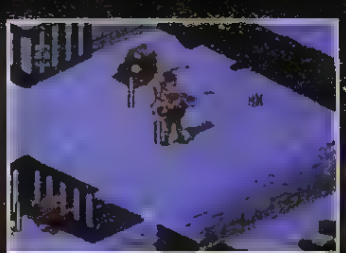
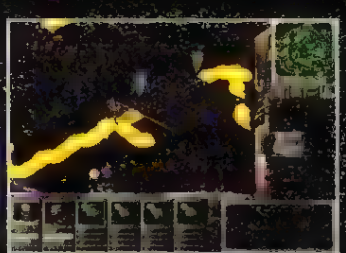


WEAVE A TANGLED WEB OF PLAYER-CREATED STORYLINES.



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Road to Nowhere

Lori Cole leaps into multiplayer in Quest for Glory V

A lot of people might call Lori Cole, designer of Sierra's *Quest for Glory* series, "a real character." And that may be true, but one of the things most fascinating about Lori is the depth to which she knows and lives her game material. When asked about the huge database that must be necessary for all of the plot twists in her latest venture *Quest for Glory: Dragon Fire*, she points to her head and says, "Well I do know about the huge database in here." And when she recounts tales of her stories and characters, I really could close my eyes and listen practically forever. I was curious about her reaction to her venture into multiplayer gaming, and here is what she had to say:

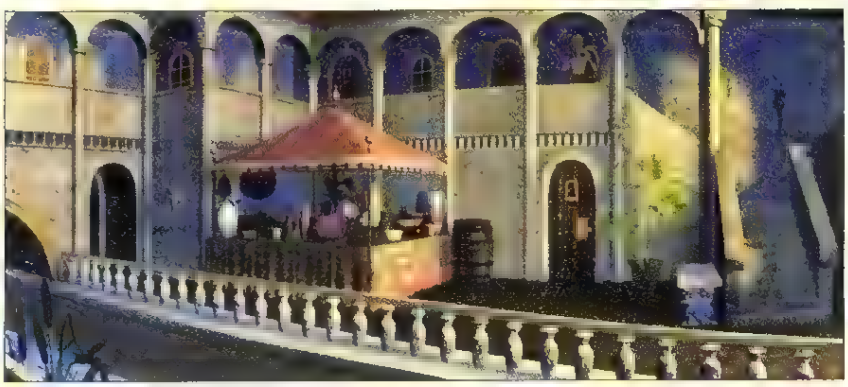
[clockwise from above]

Lori Cole ponders as co-designer Terry Robinson puts ink to paper

He'll never catch up on his reading

A Parthenon lookalike by the falls

Stucco archways surround the Mediterranean piazza



Was making the game multiplayer your idea? Or did someone twist your arm?
It was a little bit of both. I wasn't sure how to turn *Quest for Glory* into multiplayer, but I did know that multiplayer is the way to go It's so much more exciting and your characters are so much richer when they are played by real people. It was not something I objected to and the trick was to free up the players to let them have the most fun in a multiplayer environment. You strip away a lot of story and let the emphasis lie on interaction amongst the players rather than the NPC's. And keep it so that they are funneled together to do things, whether it's to compete against each other, to fight against each other, or to work cooperatively.

Will there be NPC's at all in multiplayer mode?
Yes. Because for one thing you need to buy items and to sell things. They'll be there to talk to you and give you some hints, but mostly they'll be background characters at that point in time. Other than a couple of characters that keep promoting the plot and keep the players moving; like a good RPG it's structured so that there's progressive disclosure; you keep going to more and more places as you go along. So there are NPC's that will push you along to the next area.

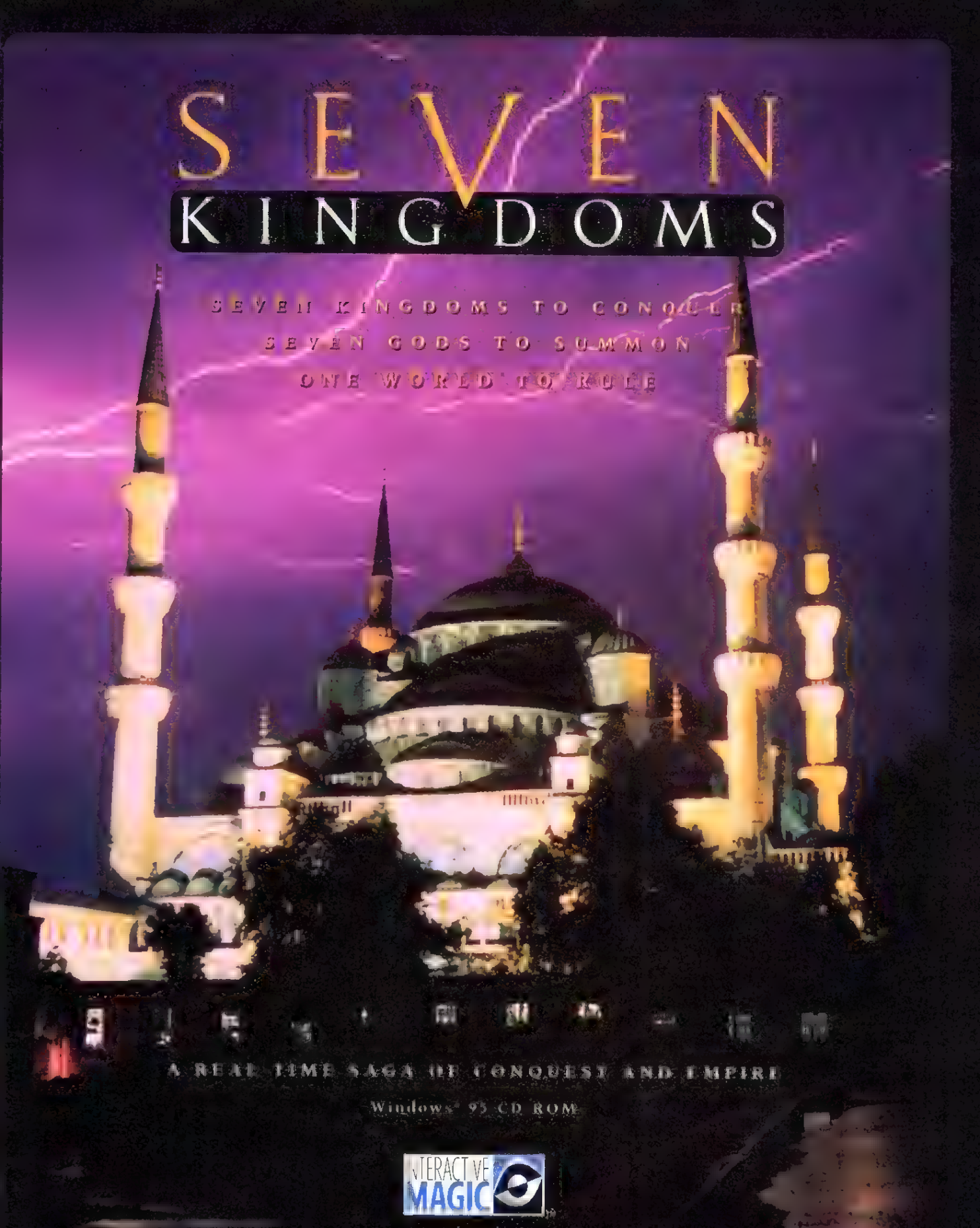
Certainly you can kill one another during the course of a game. Would you *want* to?
No. Wellllll, I never say players don't *want* to do that. I say yes, let the players do what they want to do, and if they want to turn it into a hack-and slash combat game, that's their fun. Let 'em do it. I simply want the player to have fun. So in multiplayer it may become either a true RPG hack-and slash dungeon or, on the other hand, it might be an environment for exploration and for cooperative fun. You could sit on the shoreline, you can go swimming, you can eat pizza… just chat and have a good time.

Can you bring a multiplayer character back to single player mode?
No. Unlike *Diablo* which saves only a character, we save a character and position, so that when you quit, you can come back and start from that point on. It may be passworded so that only your friends can get in, or you can invite other players and the game will stay in progress – until it's completed or until you restart it. Or you can always join somebody else's game

What if everyone dies?
If everyone dies, then… they're playing very badly. Until endgame, there's no reason to die in this game. There's only a couple of places where you're really pushed up against a wall. If you do die in multiplayer, we've got a "beam me up Scotty" spell You will be pulled back and you will be taken to a wizard's house. You will be healed, but you will be pulled away…if you're playing a competitive game and decide to backstab your partner at that point in time you can't play a *killer* game but you can push *him* back and *you'll* get a little further along. But it won't satisfy many *Diablo* players' urges for pkilling.

Besides your own, what games are you looking forward to?
It's been so long since I've played a game. But I'm looking forward to *Monkey Island 3*; I really want to see that one. I'm interested in seeing *Blade Runner* because I've seen some of the visuals – that is definitely one of the ones to look for. I said, "My gosh – they've got the look, they've got the feel!" And their animated characters are impressive. They've got *so* much of a great start that I hope the designer is able to pull it off.

Lori has billed *Dragon Fire* as the "final chapter" of the *QFG* series, but with Sierra's reputation for sequels, and Lori's gameworld so alive in her mind, we'll see. –*Cindy Yans*



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Developed by Enlight Software/Trevor Chan

Boots of Re

Baring the Betrayal

This month we continue with hints and tips for *Betrayal in Antara's* Chapters Four through Six. The *Antara* pro and con arguments rage on, but several gamers who have continued to play it even though their initial impressions of the game were negative are now admitting that its complex plot and many side adventures have grown on them. Of course, they won't admit it until after they've had several mugs of the ASCII ale we offer here at the *Boots of Re*. It's an aromatic brew with just a sniff of hops, we tell all our customers. What we don't tell them is that the herbs we use are ground and crushed in a vat when Bashed, Battered, and Bewildered hop up and down on them bare foot. Care for a mug?

Hot & Not

Betrayal in Antara was the most popular role-playing adventure in August. The keyboard-control, action-adventure *Twinsen's Odyssey* garnered the most adventure game messages.

Betrayal in Antara

Continuing Aren and William's quest

Chapter Four

Aren and William's primary objective is to find the Shepherd's lair. Their search will take them first to Mackey on the road between Ticoro and Varnasse, to Maria Liana in Isten, to the temple in Durst, to Fellich Marr outside the city gates of Ticoro, to Simon's house in Ravenne (to read a note), and finally to Simon in Levosche. Simon knows the location of the Shepherd's lair (Ticoro) and also where to find his old Shepherds' medallion (buried in his garden in Ravenne).

North of Ticoro is the door to the lair. To open the lock and end the chapter, use the medallion on the slab of rock and then turn the dial clockwise to five o'clock, counter-clockwise to one o'clock, and clockwise to ten o'clock (examine the back and the front of medallion to learn the lock's combination).

Explore Korus Landing, Isten, Everton, Teal, Elona, Burlen, Eastbank, Camille, Durst, Friole, Varnasse, Melay, Ravenne, Cardone, Levoshe, Ormede and Waterfork for optional adventures.

Chapter Five

Restore Ridgewood to order. Go east through Durst and Friole and then north past Darvi to meet Krrrfrrrlaak and learn of the troubles in Ridgewood. Then travel north to Kaelyn's house near the southern edge of Ridgewood to read a note from Garvin, her father.

The note directs the party to a cave to the north. Avoid any battles with Wraiths while searching for Garvin, they are highly lethal. The party will find a clear northern path to the cave, eventu ally. Garvin will enchants the party's weapons so they can slay all the Wraiths and undead haunting the Ridgewood. After the slaying is fin ished, return to tell Garvin and the chapter ends.

Thoroughly explore Durst, Darvi and Grandeur for addit'onal but optional adventures.

In Chapter Four, a conversation with Mackey will be beneficial

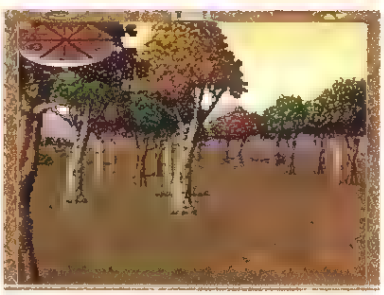
Chapter Six

The primary objective is to search for the Consort. Escape the Shepherd's lair by finding the lever chest. Solve it by spelling Malkere, and then take the glass tube to the mosaic puzzle, click on the door, place the tube on the candle and press the now high lighted buttons in any order.

Go to Gar Warren's cave, talk to him and after an interruption go through the cave's secret door and then east to the Pearl Spittoon in Ganath and talk to Khorus Bale. If William drinks a Halder's brew potion and then wrestles Khorus, Khorus will direct the party to Lokath outside the Tapped Barrel Tavern in Choth.

Lokath will refer the party to Birge standing at the gates of Lord Garson's estate in Imazi. Seek help for Birge from Chee in the Montari Caves and then take Birge's note back to Lokath in Choth. Take Lokath's note to Kahleth in the training camp just south of Choth. Kahleth will ask the party to give some mercenaries swampwalking potion. The mercenaries are north of Torlith towards Darvi – along the narrow band of dry land beside the swamp. After the mercenaries drink the potions, follow them through the swamp to the cabin. Click on the cabin door to end the chapter.

Thoroughly explore Toruth, Choth (the reward for picking a winner for the festival varies from nothing if you pick the Hero, to an Everedge sword and tower shield if you pick the Soldier), Keth, Bakril, Imazi, Ligano and Ganath for additional adventures –*Andy Backer*



[clockwise from above] This messenger warns of the troubles in Ridgewood Kaelyn must deal with in Chapter Five; Chapter Six includes a visit back to Lord Garson's estate in Imazi; "I think I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree..."; If you can spare the money, ride a carriage between towns

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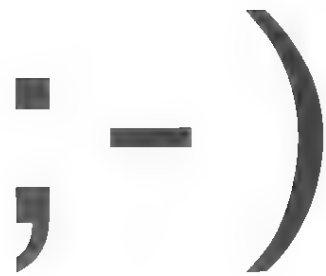

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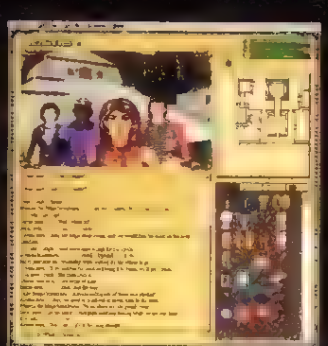

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Twinsen's Odyssey

Life is tough in the realm of whimsical mayhem

Immediately after speaking with Zoe, check the nearby chest for a key to Twinsen's workshop. The workshop holds your magic ball, some darts and the holomap. Go to the pharmacy (the building with the slingshot wielding boy on its roof) and chat with the owner. After the umbrella robbery, go outside and talk to the short woman. Use Discreet mode to sneak up on the robber and, when close, tell him to give you the umbrella, then return it to the woman.

Next, go through the upper floor window of the Magic Museum, hit the red button, then flip the switch, run downstairs and grab your tunic before the display chamber closes again. While there, check the picture on the wall in Miss Bloop's office. Go talk to the weather wizard—you can find him near the cliffs on the side of town opposite Twinsen's home. After the wizard, talk to the cow who will hint at where the lighthouse keeper went. You'll have to go to the caves to find him, but the easiest way to get there is to drop off the ledge near the cave entrance. Once in the cave, you'll find the lighthouse keeper locked up. Go the other way and, when you get to the three barrels, stand against them (near the middle point between the front two) and use your ball to hit the switch at the end of the hall. Search all the barrels in the next room (take a moment to kill the nearby pesky bats), then climb the ladder and jump down from the ledge when you get to the locked door. You'll have to hit the switch with the ball by jumping atop the nearby rock cluster. Go back up the ladder and meet Joe, then proceed through the door.

After killing the first monster, jump on the rock to reach the platform that leads to the next monster. After it's dispatched, leap across the spikes to get to the locked doors (watch out for the attack bird). In the next room is Mama Tralu. Run toward her and when close, quickly switch to aggressive and beat the living daylights out of her for a key (and goodies). Now, free the lighthouse keeper. After that, you'll find Zoe, who is complaining about Twinsen's heroic antics, so to make amends take her for a romantic stroll to the lighthouse to watch the weather wizard's show.

The ferryman may be scary and expensive, but he goes places that no one else dares

The airy Gazogem refinery holds the key to the Super Protopack

After the aliens have landed, get a ferry ticket and go to Desert Island. Near the harbor, you'll find the main town, wherein lies the healer's house. Talk to his cleaning lady, then search his shelves for gallic acid. Go to the back of the town and visit Baldino the inventor. Call Zoe using his large machine, then get the car part from Baldino. The only entrance to the wizard's school (located at the back of the cemetery) is between two thorn like trees by the rocky cliff that surrounds the graveyard, but go to the Temple Park first and play the duck shooting game. Hit two ducks to reach a secret kash horde. You'll need 120 kashes at least, but it's always good to stock up. Now, enter the wizard's school (ignore poor Joe for now). You'll first have to get through the "ghost gauntlet," so run through the maze timing your dashes with the ghosts' movements. Be discreet to reach the chest, get the key and leave the same way. Use the key on the nearby door and meet school's rector. Join for 120 kashes, then take the first test—a simple target practice exercise, which will earn you the blowgun.

After this minor victory, take the ferry back to Citadel Island and give Zoe the car part (and watch her fix the car herself. What a woman!). Twinsen must go right back to Desert Island to get a radio from Baldino... so it's off to the ferry again. Zoe will radio you that she has fixed the car after you leave Baldino's, so pick it up near the ferry. Once in the car (avoiding the trigger-happy aliens), head back toward the cemetery. Near the thorn tree entrance (almost directly ahead) drive up onto the cliff and use the ramp to jump the gap. Drive to the Balsam plant and snatch it up, then drive off the ramp to get back. Go to the Wizard's School and give the plant to the rector. With the newly acquired Horn of the Blue Triton, Twinsen has the power to heal, so help poor little Joe out before you take off to treat Dino-Fly. Use the horn on Dino Fly six times to heal him.

Have your Dino fly you to The Dome of the Slate, and look at the map near the door before entering the maze. The map is 3D and the starting point is in the upper right gateway. After getting through, the rector awards you the magic slate, which records images and maps. Get back to Dino Fly (take the ladder on the side of the dome) and travel to the wizard's school on Desert Island. The rector will give you your diploma and tell you to find the wandering wizard salesman for your new tunic (which costs 50 kashes). Once dressed in proper elderly wizard attire, head for the Hacienda to talk to the alien near the men's steambath, and just say, "Abduct Me!" Once they lead you to the ship and take off, be sure to snatch up the translator on the ship's lower deck.

Aliens amok!

Once on planet Zeelich follow the guard and wait until they lock you up. When the guard opens the door kill him, throw the big red switches, then go to the upper level and open the door to the other prisoner cell. Run out the bottom door and destroy the mech to blow a hole in the wall. Cross through the dog yard and head to the building straight across (the travel agency). Go all the way to the back, through the security gates and fall through the left hole. Now run into the Airport tower, kill the guard and get the travel token. Run back down and head to the shuttle (it's best not to stay and fight). Once in, place the token in the slot in the upper deck.

Upon your return, don't get off the shuttle and make nice in town. Head over to Zoe (and really, where else would you start to be?). She says to pick up your package at the warehouse, so run through town to reach the building. Go downstairs and push the arrows on the floor to get the crate to your box (it can't move anywhere else if there is something blocking the way). When the box is on the upper floor you can try to move it yourself or pay the guy there 12 kashes—which seems like a lot until you try to do it manually. The box contains the Protopack. Now you need the lightning spell, which requires a Pearl of Incandescence to create. So, take Dino Fly back to Desert Island and head for the docks, running past the large area with all the crates to the beach beyond where a bell awaits above a small pier. Ring the bell, then jump onto the turtle's back to reach the pearl's cave. Use the Protopack to get over the spikes. A word of caution: continue to jet forward while using the Protopack or else you'll fall. Bring the pearl back to the weather wizard's house, read his note and put the pearl in the pot to get the spell. Next, go to your neighbor's house and give him the gallic acid, take the pyramid key and read his map. To get to the sewers, rush to Chez Luc, kill the aliens, search the keg behind the bar for the key, and go to the basement. There's a hole behind one of the crates in the basement that drops you to the sewers. Once down there, place the pyramid on that odd-shaped panel near the stairs, go through the door, then use the lightning magic. To use the lightning spell you need to have full magic power. After that, you'll get a message from Baldino and it's off to Desert Island again (jump on the floating rafts, then to an exit platform to leave the sewers).

Go to the Temple of Bu...n...pa Park and head down to the mineshafts. Jump onto a cart and ride the second and fifth switch you come to. Once downstairs, hit all the switches you pass in the ... need to stay on the cart to jump to the b... (which no longer has a key, but beware the fireball spewing statues). Take the ladder down (it's this same room) and kill all guards. Then switch the ... other door. Get the ... key. Go back with the ... to the ... door, kill the guard for a key, then go through another locked door and use the lift. Now use the Protopack to get ... electrified bridge. Run to the end of the room and dispatch the guard, then get the travel token from the orange container. Next hit the bridge power switch (it's right at the end of the bridge on the wall) and kill the guard who comes across. Enter the shuttle and use the token to travel to Emerald Moon.

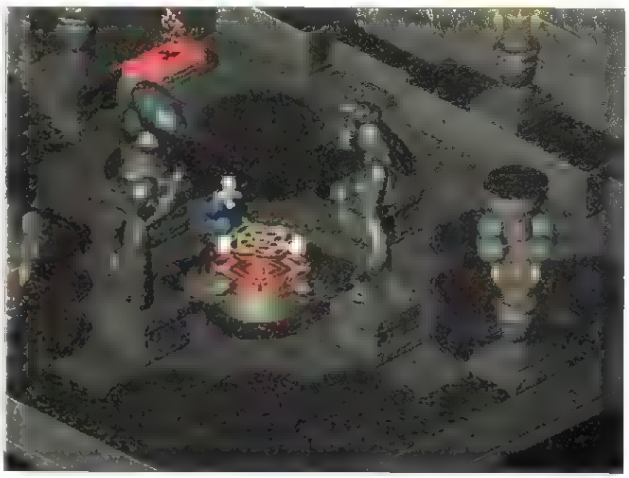
Thinking fast on his feet and knowing how unimaginative the Zeelich aliens are, Twinsen should decide the password is ... when asked. Once landed, go to the far right and enter the welcome building (it's the only building you can go in at the moment), and bid fond farewell to all the welcoming Zeelichians. Set the three round switches to green, then you can go through the buildings searching for items and things to kill, or go to the building nearest where you parked and find the upper door leading to a rocky ramp wherein lies Baldino and his little rebel wiener friend. You may need to turn the big wheel to open the door again then when Baldino gets to the locked door run up the stairs and pull the red lever. Rush through the door again and put on the space suit.

Gazogem! I need my Gazogem!

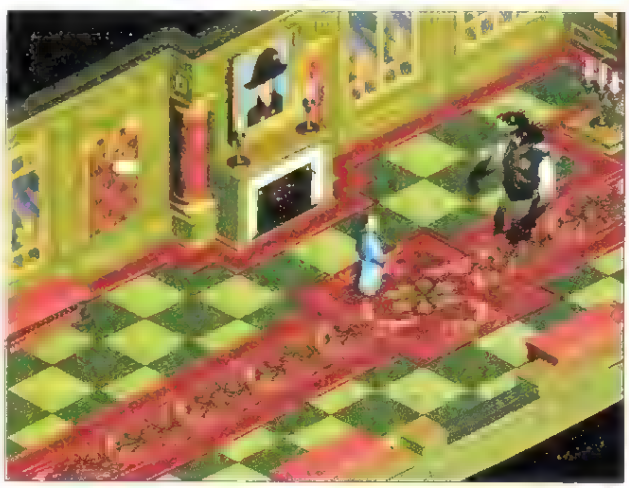
After landing, head for the pier. Take a running jump to the first rock, then use the Protopack on the second rock to fly to the rock closest the dock, then leap to the dock. Check the barrels and trees for power ups then talk to the two taximen and head for the first building (Rick's Bar) and scope the place for info. Now, go up the hill, into town. You need 100 Zlitos to give to the old guy, so hit the casino. Play the slots until you get the key, then go into the back room. Be prepared as soon as you spin the wheel two large crocs will attack. Get them in a line to beat them, or use your ball from the stage.

After this, you should have enough money. Go back to the one-legged man and give him 100 Zlitos and he'll take you to the Island of the Celebration. Get to the top of the hill and talk to the souvenir vender, then head back to Otringal.

Now, you need to find Rick, so head to his bar. Go onstage and through the semi-hidden stage door. Throw the stage switches in the following order to open the grate: middle, left, right. Next, position the pillars so that you can jump to them from the boxes: position the tallest under the grate and the shorter pillar in the middle point between the lower box and the tall pillar, then jump across and enter the duct. Rick will tell you to go to the hotel in the high part of town, but you can't get there yet. Go talk to the gas station attendant (watch out, the guards are trying to kill you) and he'll tell you about the island of Francos. Immediately go and take a taxi to Francos. On Francos, buy a pick axe in the first building. Everyone is looking for the Francos Fragment on this section of the island, but the piece is buried in a patch of grass near the water between the first building and the bar, so go get it. Next, go to the pipes near the fence of the Gazogem refinery. You'll see that the top of the fence is bent down in one spot. Jump onto the pipe



The ominous Dark Monk Temple. Place the key right in the center



The Emperor's guardian is no match for Twinsen's wild and wacky swordplay

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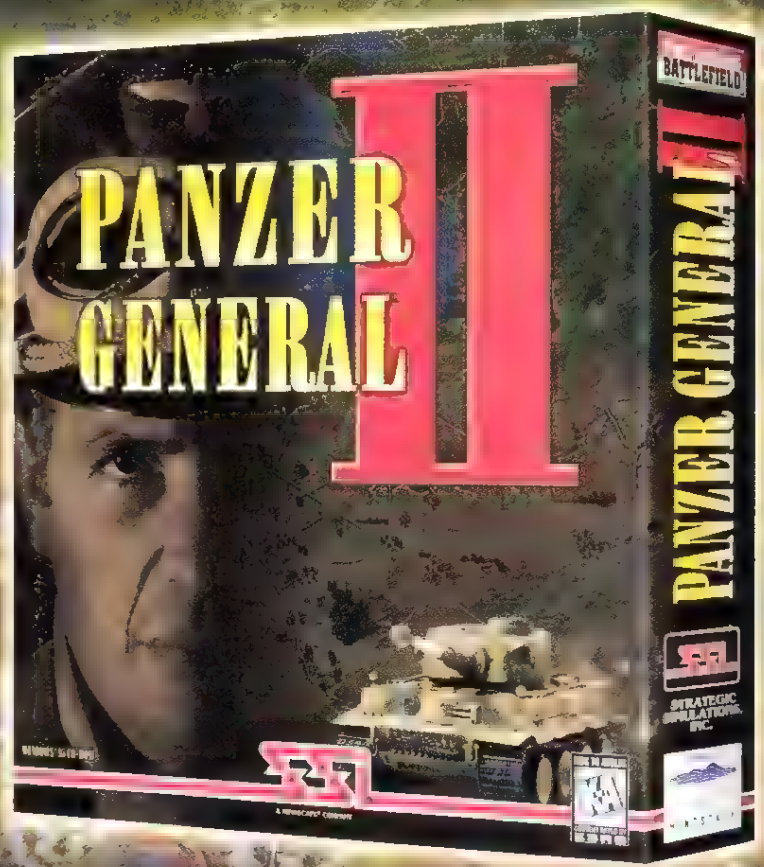

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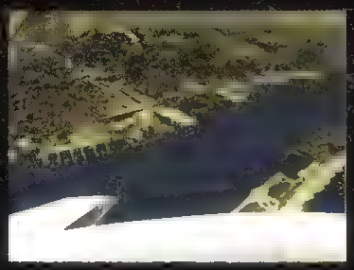

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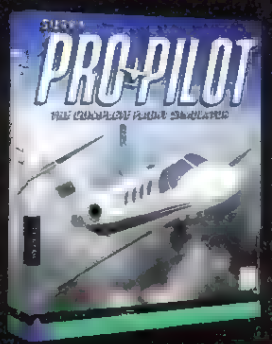

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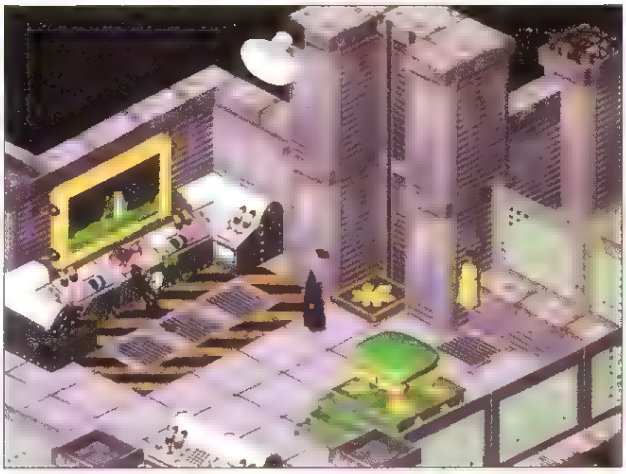
there, then over the fence and enter the building with only one guard outside it.

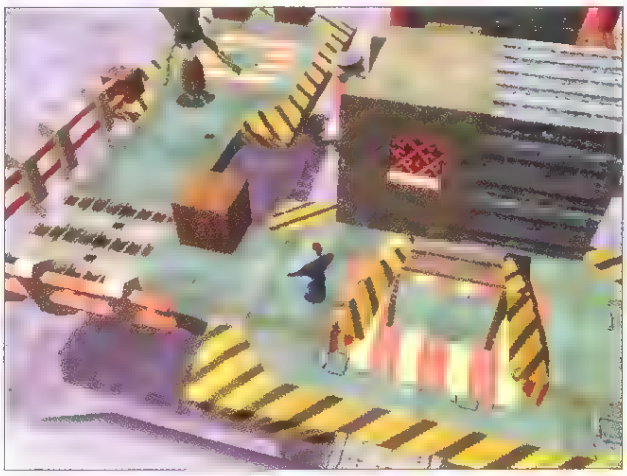
This building is full of problematic jumps, with harmful gas spouts that can destroy poor Twinsen. The switches either turn gas leaks on and off, or shut them off temporarily. In the room with the moving platform and the side gas vents at the top of the screen, hit the left-hand switch to turn on the top vents, shutting off the bottom vents, then use discreet mode on the platform so you can duck the gas. Look for the key boxes spread through the rooms, along with secret side passages containing power-ups. Also, you'll have to kill a technician from long distance, who then drops a key—use your ball to collect the key. After this, kill a guard for another key, then proceed up the stairs, go through the gate, get the Gazogem and exit the building. Now outside, jump onto the lower pipe beside the barrels, then onto the barrels and over the fence to freedom and take a taxi back to Otringal.

Go back to Baldino, give him the Gazogem and he'll modify your Protopack. Now, head back to the dock and up the hill. Use the Super Protopack to get across the waterfall at the top and follow the path to reach the hotel (watch out for the machine gunner and don't bother the Imperial Guards. You can't kill them). The hotel is the building opposite the Imperial Guards and inside is a rude, rather tough bellboy just waiting to die (and a guard as well). The bellboy "relinquishes" a key to the pool area. Johnny Rocket is by the pool, so go have a word with him, then follow him to his room. The next room has some agents bugging Rocket's room, and the third has a showering woman in it—this last room will also let you exit through the window. Get to the lower part of the island through the elevator lift building (just drop down through the tube) and make your way cautiously to the souvenir shop and show the shopkeeper the ring.

Go down the stairs in the shop and talk to the dissidents. After getting the pistol, head for the pier and take the taxi to the Island of Celebration. Head past the temple and toward the lava flow. You need to time your jumps so that you land on the moving chunks of rock. When you get to the small water body where the crystal clump lies, use your Protopack to fly along the pool's outer edge to avoid the monster, then use your pick axe on the crystal (giving Twinsen a working laser pistol) and head toward the ladder. Watch out for the volcanic rocks spewing up as you get back to safe ground.



Can Twinsen foil the foul Zeelich Emperor's plans before it's too late...? Well, no actually



This is the best spot to be in when fighting the assassin, just watch out for the box debris

Now, head back to the Island of Francos and the Gazogem refinery. Go into the building being patrolled by two guards. Inside, kill the guards and use the pistol to hit the switches behind them. Going from left to right, put the second and forth switch in the down position, then go through the doors. This leads to an air tanker. Board it to get to the offshore refinery and a nasty surprise. Once the assassin starts throwing boxes, the best way to kill him is to get to the right of the large box near the dock. You'll have an open space to shoot him, but watch out for the box debris, which can hurt you. Shoot him with the laser pistol until he keels over, get the key, then head for the elevator and go down.

The dark side of the mist: Wannie world

Step off the elevator and use the ramp to jump on the trash can, then shoot the technician and the switches to right of him. Once the barriers are down, proceed outside and fight your way to the Wannie village. Go into the mine and talk to the old man, then go deeper to find the Wannie family preparing for dinner. Grab the Wannie's glove from the coat rack, then when dinner is ready, sit at the table for a piece of tart. Leave and give the tart to the old man, who then gives you the key to the chapel. Head for the chapel, watching out for the fireballs and killer fireflies. The monk will tell you to speak to his housekeeper (in the first room you come across when first entering the mine). The maid will sing the Ferryman's Song, but you need four gems to pay the ferryman with, so head back to the guarded outpost near the beginning of the island and into the cave (it's just left of the large sign). Riding the mine cart will get you past the lava fall, leading to a gem and an extra life. Search the crystal piles for gems as well and remember that your Super Protopack can cross lava, but don't get hit by anything. After getting as many gems as possible (get more than four, you'll need them later), jump the gap near the small, pig-like animal and enter another cave. Take the path between the two workers, jump across the platform and kill the bouncer Wannie for a key. Go into the Wannie shrine and steal their fragment (you may need to use the Super Protopack to reach it). Immediately afterwards, several Wannies attack. Every Wannie in the cave now "wannies" to kill you, so make like a tree and leave—really, really fast.

After escaping the mine, go to the ferryman's dock and use the song to call him. Tell him to take you to the Island of the Mosquibee's. Once docked, talk to the Mosquibee flying around the beach and ask to be taken to his Queen. Show the Queen your ring and she'll test you. To win the test, just hit the rocks with your ball until you get a key and open the middle door to acquire the Blowtron weapon (a more powerful blowgun). After talking to the Queen again, killer hotdogs start storming the place, so fight your way through the Octagonal doors and to a hexagonal exit to the outside (don't go through the hole in the floor yet, this leads back to the beach). Once outside again, avoid the paratroopers as you make a mad dash over the rickety suspension bridge and into another cave. Get the health apples in this room, avoid the spider (just jump it) and use the elevator to get to the mountaintop. Run around the path, talk to the old man, then put the Wannie glove on and go up the ladder to fight the flying walrus (use the glove to reflect the walrus' fireballs back at it). Use the key on the box near the old Mosquibee to get the Mosquibee fragment, then talk to the oldster again. He tells you that the Queen has been kidnapped and the others have fled to the island of the Volcano, so head back the way you came

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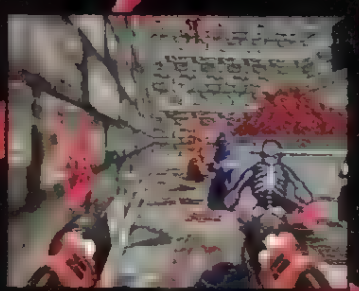

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and down the hole with the rope to get to the beach. Kill the two guards and get the gem hidden amidst the strange bell plants and have the ferryman take you to Volcano Island.

The remaining Mosquibees are hiding out in a cave on the far end of this island cluster, but to get there, you'll have to jump onto the moving platforms that are in the lava and work your way over the three islands (be sure to search for crystals). Once in the cave, there are two extra lives to be found and a few Mosquibees. You'll discover that the Queen has been taken back to the Island of the Wannies. To leave, take running leaps across the islands and jump onto the gray stone platform to get to the ferryman dock. Go to the Wannies' island.

Enter the crystal mine near the large sign. Jump onto the conveyor belt near the tracks in the first part of the cave, hop onto the elevator, then jump through the opening. In the next room, kill the rude switch operator and put both switches into the upper position, wait for a box to come by and jump into it. After getting dumped into the next room, jump on the crates, then leap to the ladder and go up. Once on the roof, jump to the next rooftop and fall down the hole to have an impromptu meeting with the Queen. She'll give you the CX key. Kill the guard and hit the switch to open the door (the ball works best for this). Fight your way to the ferryman again and go to the Island of the Mosquibees.

Before going into the Slate Island maze, study the map by the door

The venerable school of magic; like any proper institute of higher learning. It's overpriced, in a horrible location and they make you do all the work while the professors just sit around all day

Once there, head for the rope below the huge stone and climb up. Now, work your way through to the throne room (it's the one with the red carpets). There are two lesser, but well armed guards to either side of the throne, but the armored bodyguard is the big obstacle. He's very tough to kill, so try to damage him from long distance. Once all three are dispatched, go through the door in the back of the throne. Next, you'll need to use your Super Protopack to move in the rooms with the strange mist. Make your way to the room with the switch that opens the upper left hand door temporarily. Avoid the monsters, as you get through the door to the outside again, kill the guards in the hallway and go up the ladder. Watch those big gun turrets while killing a guard for the key, then enter the center building.

Watch out for the entrenched soldiers, as you run to the wheel that opens the door. In these rooms, avoiding most enemies is best and shoot the switches to open doors. Also, don't bother attacking the sword-wielding Imperial soldiers (you can't hurt them yet). The last door leads to an entrenched soldier who runs away. Get the key on the wall and take his lead by leaping over the walls to get back down to the locked door on the far side of the room. Go through this door, kill the guard and take the elevator down. Finally, you'll meet the Emperor who makes a full confession. Attack the Emperor and his guard, get the key and open the chest to get the sword, which enables you to kill the elite guards. After killing one of the guards, go back up the elevator and dispatch the guards for another key. Use the key on the locked door, go inside and get the shuttle token. Work your way back outside, head for the shuttle and use the token to travel to the Imperial Palace.

After landing, use your trusty sword to get a key from the guards and go through the gate, up the hill and into the palace. In the Palace, the quickest route is north as far the rooms go, then all the way west, then north. The keys are either in chests or on guards. In the final room, Twinsen faces three royal guards and a two-headed statue that comes alive. Kill this monster for a key to open the chest where the creature was standing watch. Inside is the Sups Fragment and fireball attack—Twinsen's final level of magic. Getting out of the palace is easier if you go south from this room as far as the trail leads, then east to the exit. Make your way cautiously to the lower side of the island and head for the docks to catch a taxi (or the air shuttle), then on to the Island of Celebration.

The end game (a.k.a. "save often!")

Once to the island, enter the Dark Monk temple. Place the Dark Monk key in the fountain, then leave the temple to face your true nemesis. Go to the right side of the temple, following the pillars back until you get to the rock that lets you jump to the lowest pillar. Jump from pillar to pillar to get to the book, then to the hand, then into the hole. Now comes the hardest part of the game. Those robot elephants are tough and keep coming. Destroy them when you can and always kill the rocket launching elephants. Get to where the four wizards are and go to the machine with the video monitors. Activate the switches in the following order (going from left to right): 2, 1, 4, 3. Then hit the switch to the right of the wizards' stasis chambers to set them free. After they blow open the cage, take the lift up, then promptly take the elevator down again. Get to the hole opposite the lift (where a robot elephant will be) and drop down.

You'll need to kill the rocket launching elephant for the key, but there are plenty of other robotic elephants in the way. Throughout this last part, finding "safe" spots on the screen from where you can use your distance weapons is imperative for dispatching villains for keys and hearts. Try to have full health before opening the gate, and destroy the two robots in this next room. Once they are gone, quickly fall through the now open hole in the floor and make your way to the lower end of the next room (down the stairs) to kill the rocket launching elephant for a key. Kill the robot elephant that teleports in, then go through the gate and kill the final rocket launching robot. Get full power before proceeding down the stairs.

At the bottom of the stairs are two gun toting robots and two Funfrocks. Let the Funfrocks push the robots into the lava if possible. One of the Funfrocks is a clone (made of fire), the other the genuine article. Push past them and rush down the next set of stairs. Go to the far-left end corner of the room (where an extra life waits). From here you can kill the Funfrocks with your fireball in relative safety. You must kill the real Funfrock to make the clones stop coming. Once they are both gone, walk to the lava where the children's cage fell. *–Jason D'Aprile*

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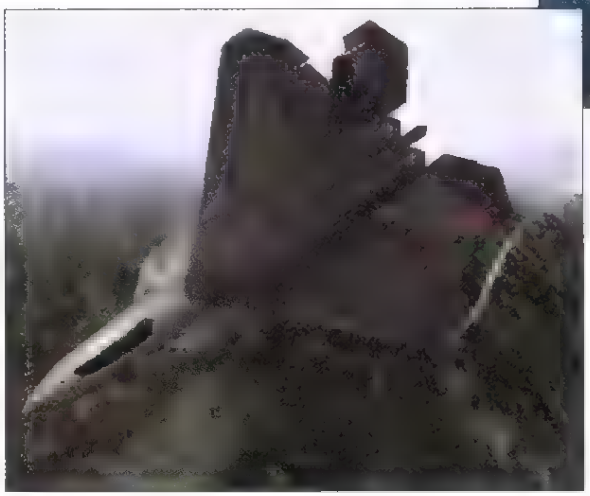
The Hangar

The future of combat flight sims



(Top) **Air Warrior 2 is being updated with Direct3D-supported, fully-textured world and planes, network speech communications for both H2H and online play, Pacific campaigns, a new European campaign, and a cargo plane load of other new features and aircraft. This is an early screen shot of what's to come**

(Left) **DID's F-22 Air Dominance Fighter is due to release during the last quarter of 1997. Even when a couple of companies produce sims based on the same aircraft each has inevitably had its own style, flavor, and approach**

Is the PC flight sim world approaching critical mass? Before discounting this as just a case of crying "the sky is falling," consider their side of the argument - sims recreate the real world and presently there are no wars involving any major aircraft producing nations pushing them to rush production of the next generations of fighters. The high cost and complexity of advanced fighters already limits the physical numbers of fighters being produced, but they also dictate the number of designs produced as well. If the Eurofighter and JSF (Joint Strike Fighter) programs are any indication (where several companies and/or countries co-develop aircraft), this will further reduce new model production worldwide. What this means is the pool of fighter rides (and thus material to base sims on) for the future is looking pretty shallow.

It must seem pretty foolish for two developers to produce simulations based on the same airplane, helicopter, or war period never mind doing so in the same year. After all of the hoopla over the names of two F-22 sims, when you realize that a third F-22 sim was already out (*Jet Fighter III*) and another is in the pipeline (DID's *F-22 Air Defense Fighter*), one can't help but wonder if there really is something to worry about. There just aren't that many new airplanes coming out in the foreseeable future - or at least not that the public knows about.

To counteract the high cost and complexity in real world aviation, many have turned to the development of Uninhabited Combat Air Vehicles (UCAV) also known as Unmanned Tactical Aircraft (UTA). The concepts behind Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) like the Lockheed Martin DarkStar, Teledyne Tyan Aeronautical Global Hawk, and the U.S. Navy Highly Maneuverable Lethal Vehicle (HMLV) are not new. But unlike the UMF (Un-Manned Fighter) seen in *Falcon 3.0*'s *Operation: Fighting Tiger* expansion (a robotic fighter that was part missile, part fighter), UCAVs are human-controlled.

Some of the advantages over conventional fighters both uninhabited vehicles share are very tight turning radii, high top speeds, better acceleration, and lower cost (predicted to be 80% less than manned aircraft). Their performance advantages are mostly due to not being limited by human physiology (designers envision 20g sustainable turns (anything greater causes out-of-round turbine failures), but their 40% reduction in weight and volume over manned aircraft carrying the same payload doesn't hurt either. Another advantage is when they're shot down, they don't leave aircrews in enemy hands or dead.

It's been said that if UCAVs generate enough interest they might replace some currently planned manned aircraft. Lockheed Martin Tactical Aircraft Systems, McDonnel Douglas, Boeing, and Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works all have new unmanned projects underway. (Lockheed Martin has even proposed modifying/recycling retired F-16As to UCAVs.)

Forgetting about cultural acceptance barriers and Congressional interest required for funding UCAVs, what does this mean for sim jockeys? James Bledsoe, manager of advanced strike systems at McDonnell Douglas's Phantom Works believes that the most of the training of operators for UCAV missions can be completely simulated. So sitting in front of a CRT with a joystick, throttle, and pedals may become more realistic than anyone ever imagined. (It'd be interesting to see what kind of viewing systems they come up with.) Instead of software and hardware advancing to more accurately simulate aircraft, the real world counterparts are changing to meet the limitations of our computers – certainly a strange turn of events. Maybe all of the hours spent sitting in front of your computer may actually reduce the amount of training Uncle Sam will need to prepare the next generation of military (remote) fighter pilots. The possibilities are both intriguing and disturbing at the same time.

Although there will be a shakeout in the industry, rather than reaching the end of an era we're actually entering a golden age of flight sims. Stiff competition and the high number of product releases will benefit consumers in the long run. Flights sims are only just beginning to fulfill our lusting. If you're worried that most future flight sims may be based on UCAVs, don't forget that historical sims are here to stay (*Red Baron II*, *Sabre Ace*, and *Warbirds 2.0* are all on the way). Then of course there are plenty of aircraft in the current world arsenal out there as well (*iA-10 Warthog*, Jane's Combat Simulation's *F-15* and *Longbow 2*, *iF-16 Viper*, *Falcon 4.0*, and *F/A-18 Hornet 3.0*, just to name a few).

Sims of the latest and greatest real world fighters will always be made by someone, and competition for them will likely remain. But other than having to make a decision of which sim to buy *if* you only can buy *one*, it isn't the end of the world. So to the Chicken Little's out there: the sky isn't falling – it's raining flight sims!

Over and out. *–Ben Chiu*

SSI's Su-27 2.0 brings to the table textured objects and terrain based on real world data. Add in its upcoming dynamic campaign system and it just may make you forget about any worries over sims based on future aircraft

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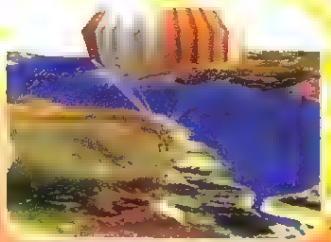

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Air Combat Advisor

Part II: Moving from the BnZ to make the kill

Previously we discussed some factors that make it more attractive to change from the BnZ attack to a turn fight. In addition to position opportunities, we're looking for are E and ammo advantages as well. Without getting into the philosophical arguments regarding concepts, such as air combat chivalry and vulching, the easiest position to make a kill from is from a position of absolute advantage. Whether or not you choose to take advantage of some of these *opportunities* is up to you.

Hit 'em while they're down

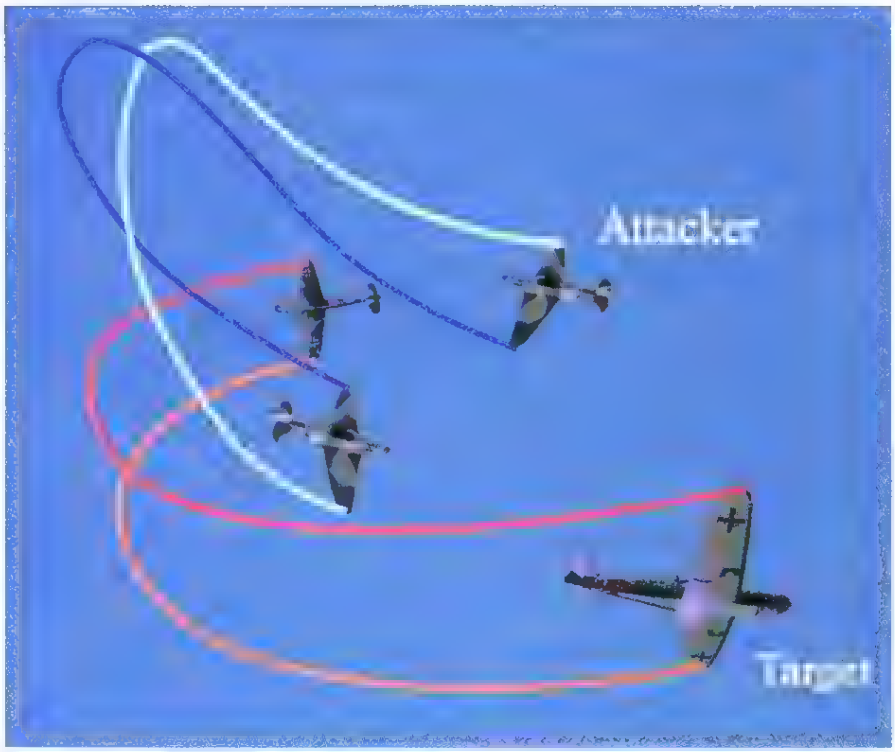
"Down" can refer to a lot of things in air combat, but in all cases when it's used in regard to your enemy it works in your favor. *Down* can mean down on E, down on ammo, down as in relative altitude, and so on. We know if the enemy is down on E, you stand a chance of out turning a better turning airplane even if it's only for a short period of time. In many cases (if your marksmanship skills are adequate) that's all you'll need.

Estimating when the enemy's E supply is down isn't an exact science, but there are some situations that'll make it more likely than not. If a bandit's been attempting to out-turn you on each BnZ attack run with the intent of getting a shot at you as you zoom, the chances are pretty good that after a couple of passes his E state will be lower than when you first started the attack.

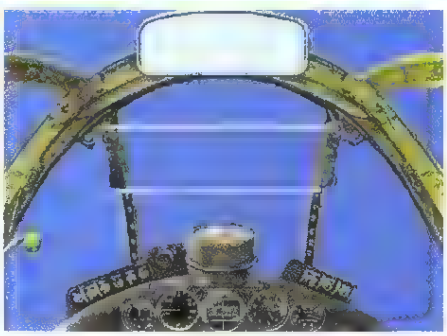
Down on altitude is easy to figure out. If the bandit is down on the deck, his maneuvering choices become severely limited. If he's down on airspeed he can't dive to gain any, and he also loses one direction for maneuvering (down). This makes him a riper target for picking.

Although our discussions still remain in the realm of one-on-one fighting, if the enemy was just engaged in a turn fight, the chances are also pretty good that his E bank is near empty or is already overdrawn. The thing to be aware of is that the longer you wait to attack in this situation, the more time the bandit has to *regroup* (recover E).

This same situation also lends itself to presuming the bandit's ammo supply isn't what it used to be. Although there is no safer situation to attack from than attacking an unarmed opponent, you need to be careful. A good pilot (real or artificial) will only fire if he can hit you, so if your opponent knows his stuff he may still have some shells in reserve with your name on them. Know that the bandit may not show his hand (gamble his remaining shells right away), so don't dump your E believing you're dealing with an unarmed target without thoroughly assessing the situation first. Now I'm not suggesting that you make yourself a target to see if the bandit shoots at you, just assume the worst and work from there. In other words fight the battle like the bandit has ammo. You'll learn soon enough whether the bandit really has something to shoot you with if the battle lasts long enough. (Hopefully it won't – and it'll end in your favor!) Just keep his ammo situation in mind and take advantage of his predicament.



▲ **The Roll Away is a variation of the High Speed Yo-yo where you "roll away" from the bandit at the top of the climbing turn. Although this increases the distance between you and your target it doesn't work very well in airplanes with poor roll rates**



This bandit is low on altitude and showing us his tail. We have the E advantage and ammo, so even though we're in a "traditional" BnZ aircraft, turning becomes an option. The biggest problem is going to be slowing down to corner speed ▶

Altitude, dude

Although E discussions tend to treat altitude and airspeed as equals, they really aren't. In a turning battle it doesn't matter how much altitude you have if you're well below corner speed. If you don't have the airspeed to maneuver, you can be killed regardless of your altitude.

Another situation you want to look for is a bandit that Immelmans or uses some other extreme vertical maneuvers in response to each of your attack runs. If his altitude is much higher after an attack or two, you can pretty much bank on the fact that his airspeed will be pretty low at the top of those maneuvers.

Hit the brakes!

We know our biggest problem is going to be slowing down to corner speed. E conversion maneuvers like the high yo-yo or roll away fit the bill. Do anything it takes to slow down (drop the brakes, landing gear, flaps, whatever) because if you don't slow down enough, you'll be too slow to zoom away and too fast to turn – perfect for getting your tail shot to pieces.

Until next time – sometimes it's better to be lucky than to be a better pilot. *Ben Chiu*

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XCar

Trapped between the racetrack and the arcade

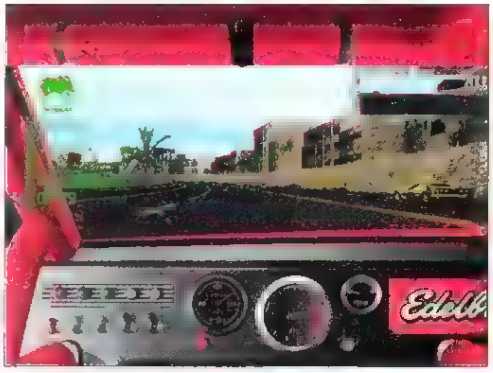
Developing a simulation is always fraught with peril. Marketing and sales push for a product with a "mass" appeal, which a hardcore simulation is deemed not to have (never mind the sales of games like *Falcon 3.0*, *Longbow*, *Grand Prix 2* and *NASCAR Racing 2*). Developers tend to frown on arcade elements, arguing it cheapens their simulation, which is equally bogus (what about *Falcon*'s "Instant Action?") However, when the two warring factions butt heads, you can end up with a product that seems trapped somewhere in the never never land between the two extremes, which ultimately creates a product that's unable to satisfy either market.

Such is the case with *XCar*, a hardcore racing simulation that is flawed both in concept as well as execution. Its schizophrenia is particularly evident in the track design, which varies from the real (Lime Rock, Road America) to the believably real (Meridian Coast, Seattle) to the absurd (Infinity Loop, Mayan). The last two, in particular, seem transported in from some Sega arcade game.

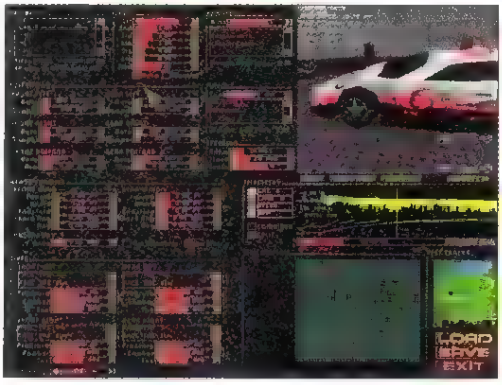
Conceptually, it sounds wonderful to have a simulation of "experimental racing," but much of the appeal of a *Grand Prix 2* or *NASCAR Racing* is being able to take the wheel of a real world race car. Saying these cars are experimental, therefore their performance has no equivalent, seems to cheapen the simulation. However this is a minor problem compared to the actual execution of the simulation. While competitive, feature-wise, to *Grand Prix 2*, *XCar* is considerably behind the curve with the most important feature – feel. It just doesn't feel right, whatever *right* may be. The controls feel choppy, with little progressive steering – often, you'll find yourself gradually turning and suddenly snapping to the right or left, a problem the external view bears out. Despite pretenses toward being a hardcore simulation, the only way *XCar* truly feels playable is when it's set to arcade mode.

The handling feels like the vehicle has a pin stuck in the middle, not properly modeling weight transfer. It doesn't give the impression that it's simulating four separate wheels and the forces that influence them during cornering. Whether the game takes any and all of this stuff into account is ultimately irrelevant – it doesn't *feel* like it does. Most of the cars tend toward violent oversteer, and are uncontrollable at the limit. Four wheel powerslides occur at unusual angles, again like no other closed- or open wheeled race car. The only way to tame these savage beasts is to increase your rear wing to the point of killing your top speed on the straights, which is pretty much a recipe for last place finishes.

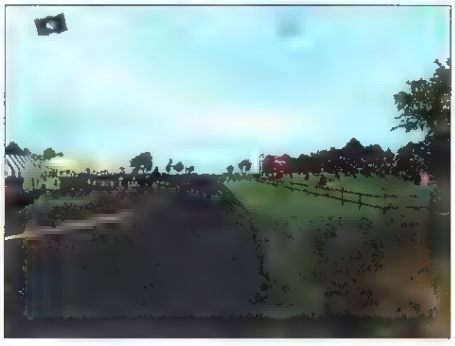
The joystick routines are also problematic,



The Meridian Coast is the most entertaining track in the game



The setup screen is intimidating as hell, but is a tuner's delight



An example of the schizophrenia present in the game. Would any real race track have a picket fence and cows by the side of the track?

slowly losing calibration with every lap, requiring you to make constant corrections during a race. This is a far cry from the precise steering feel of *Grand Prix 2* and *NASCAR Racing*. A little more tolerance in reading the joystick port would help. Equally problematic is the near requirement of a steering wheel for the game – it is virtually unplayable with both a SideWinder 3D Pro and a CH Flightstick Pro.

While a simulation like *Grand Prix 2* hides its complexity behind a number of "advanced" menus, *XCar* lets it all hang out, flaunting its complexity in a setup screen that's a godsend to serious sim fans and should scare the hell out of most players. Nominal online hints are provided, and the manual goes to some length to attempt to explain every car term, but the game should've included some canned setups for beginners to build from. A wonderful feature is the addition of a test track, with a high speed oval and a slalom course.

The game also has an amazing VCR replay function, allowing you to not only view the entire race but also monitor the telemetry data. Unfortunately, replaying your accidents, which is what most people use the replays for, is an underwhelming experience, showing a puff of smoke and a few polygons flying around from the impact. Where's the visual damage, the bodywork and wheels flying across the track – the effects race games since the legendary *Indianapolis 500* managed to include?

Despite this flaw, the game is fairly attractive, with a separate version for regular SVGA cards and the 3Dfx accelerator (regrettably you can only have both installed in separate directories). While the 3Dfx version gives more consistent frame rates on most machines, the SVGA version is arguably better looking, with sharper graphics. The filtering of the 3Dfx card turns all of the low-resolution car textures to mush, making the game look slightly out of focus.

The most important component of any racing game is its car model, and it appears the one in *XCar* is inherently flawed. While it has all of the features of its higher-profile competitors, plus some they *should* have, it lacks their polish and, most importantly, physics and feel; as such, it can only be recommended to the incredibly patient and tolerant racers who have the time and ability to try and come to grips its twitchy cars. –*Steve Bauman*

★★★☆

XCar

Bethesda Softworks • www.xcar.com • Requirements: DOS, 60MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer. 2-8 players, LAN, modem

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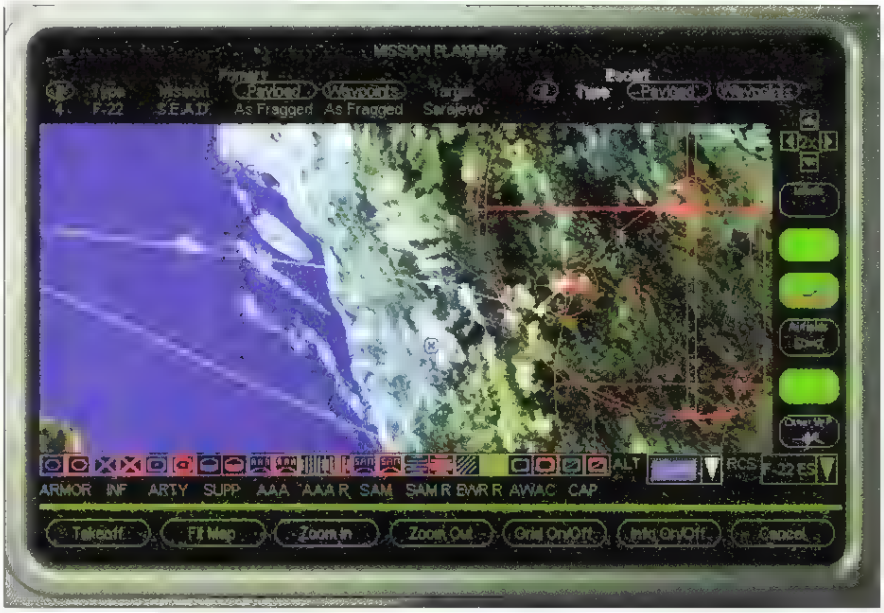
iF-22

High-tech aerial combat

With the advent of stealth technolo gy, passive sensors, and data links to allied units, the F-22 has ushered in a new era in piloting military aircraft Computer technology has become a key ingredient in the flight combat soup with multifunction displays giving a wealth of vita information at the touch of a button A strate gic element has crept into the mix, where avoiding and surprising is almost equally as important as flying rings around the enemy Interactive Magic s *iF-22* gives a good repre sentation of high tech machinery integrated with the flying skills of a combat pilot. The fol lowing article should give plenty of help in mastering this new combination



Mission planning map showing enemy radar range circles

Stealth: The only way to fly

The first step in stealthy flying is mission preparation. Read through the mission objec tive and check the payload carefully, loading only the weapons which will benefit the mis sion If your mission will be easier to accom plish by staying undetected, refrain from load ing up the external hardpoints ordnance on them greatly increases your Radar Cross Section (RCS) and chance of detection Examine the Mission Map carefully and study all possible enemy units in the area. Make sure to select the AAA Rg SAM Rg and EWR Rg buttons so the r detection circles appear on the map. Next set the Altitude (ALT) setting and the RCS setting to their applicable ranges for the mission Tweak the navigation and patrol waypoints so your route will when pos sible not intersect the displayed enemy radar rings. As an added safeguard consider setting the RCS to F 22 ES even when your aircraft is configured for full stealth mode (F 22 FS) This gives you a more liberal view of the radar rings and adds some breathing room when actually up in the air. If you re involved in mis sions behind enemy lines, check the locations of any enemy airfields on the map and try to keep your flight a considerable dista ice away too close an approach can lead to enemy interceptors vectoring in from such bases

Upon takeoff several checks should be per formed immediately Pull up the Communications/Navigation mode on the MFD and make sure that your In Flight Data Link (IFDL) is operating with any AWACS n the area. If not, use the UHS communications and activate a link, giving you added informa tion on targets along the flight path If the mission has a Forward Air Controller (FAC) make sure an IFDL is set up with this unit as well for advanced ground target information As a general rule, turn your active radar off and leave it off until needed, relying on the passive sensors and the IFDL for keeping track of units. When the need for radar arises, try to radiate only for extremely short periods of time just long enough to paint an accurate picture of the surroundir gs Consider a quick course change as well to confuse any enemies who may have picked up this radar signature

The advanced computers and display sys tems give an extra advantage to an F 22 p lot, and prope. usage can turn the tide against ess technologically inclined enemies. The Defense mode when used religiously can be the most important display in your cockpit By keeping this mode on an active MFD through out the miss on, you can easily keep track of enemy radar and plot a clear path to avoid detection Keep your active radar off as much as possible using your passive radar sensors and the IFDL as your eyes. On a mission where stealth capability is critical use the Defense mode to stay clear of any ground and aircraft radar rings or cones Targets can be acquired using their own radar emissions to paint your screen thus negating the need for your own radar for long periods of t me When setting out on a strike mission it is often a wise move to avoid enemy aircraft encoun tered along the way With the stealth capabili ties of the plane this is easy to accomplish and gains the added advantage of (possible) extra missiles left for the flight home. If enemy fighters are detected and your F 22 is still safely hidden behind the cloak of stealth, you can usually fly right past them and continue on without a hitch Quick y check the Attack Mode on a MFD to find out the instant a.ti tude figures for such enemies, try staying a good 10,000 to 20,000 feet above them to avoid detection

When in flight there are several other hints to help retain your stealth capability Add tional heat from the F-22 s engines can increase the Infrared Cross Section (IRCS) and make it easier for enemy tracking units to lock on Avoid using the afterburner if at all possi ble and try keep ng your throttle at a lower setting to decrease the amount of exhaust heat generated Make sure to occasionally check the Stealth Status mode to see if the IRCS has increased significantly, and if so try decreasing your speed slightly Keep your wing men in formation until battle is initiated Once sent out of formation or given attack commands they will often activate radar and poss bly alert enemies to your presence Always keep in mind that opening the weapon bays will also greatly increase you RCS After f ring a weapon make sure that the bay doors are closed unless a second shot is immediately needed or an additional target is already in range

Missiles away

Using the stealth features on the F-22 can put you in a great position for the assaults on air and ground targets, leaving your enemies wondering where the attack came from Depending on whether you aircraft has been detected or not, you ll have several options for achieving qu ck kills

n air-to-air combat beyond visual range the AIM 120 is the weapon of choice If the target is not alerted to your presence, close to within 10 15 miles, keeping the target in front of you at all times. When the target is well within the effective range as displayed on the HUD or Attack Mode MFD and the "shoot" cue is displayed, be prepared to launch. The best firing positions come when trailing the enemy or when it is crossing your path of flight Missile avoidance is much easier with a missile coming directly at you so avoid launching in a head-on position. If an enemy aircraft is alert ed to your position try firing from a greater distance, hopefully before you are in the range of its own air to air missiles. With a tar get closing fast, switch to a short range missile ike the Sidewinder (AIM 9). Since this is an

infrared-guided missile, the best attack position is trail ng the target. Don t be afraid to save the missile, however, if your target is directly in front of you Switch to guns and see if the enemy can be dispatched in that manner

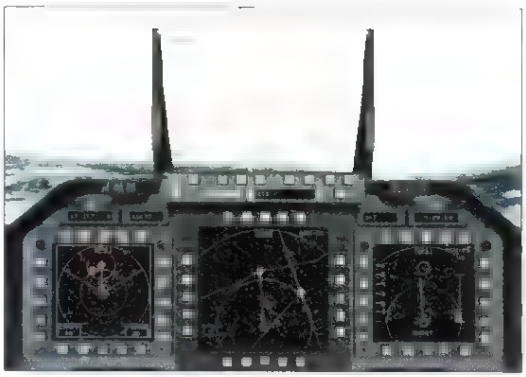
The F 22 is a highly computerized aircraft, and there are many display features which can help in acquiring and locking targets. The Attack Mode d'splay has one major feature that is vital in air-to-air combat: the alt tude graph on the right side. With one visual check of this display you can gain a quick idea of a target's altitude in relationship with you. Combine this with Tactical Mode and a three dimensional model of the situation around you is created

Another interesting feature of the F 22 is the thrust vectoring aspect of engines, which allows for very high Angles of Attack (AoA) and t ght turns at near sta l levels. The AoA limiter is a function that shou d usually be kept on during normal flight, it keeps the AoA imited to a maximum of 12° and pre vents loss of control of the plane at inopportune times. When involved in a close dogfight, however, this l miter can be turned off, giving you the ability to turn quicker and line up a target especially with the 20mm cannon. A steady hand should be kept on the controls using this maneuver or you can easily put the plane out of position and right in your target's sights Also, when involved in a close combat dogfight use the declutter key; it will clean up the HUD view and make it easier to visually track your target. A shift to the padlock view can give an even clearer picture of the target, though at the loss of the majority of your instrumentation.

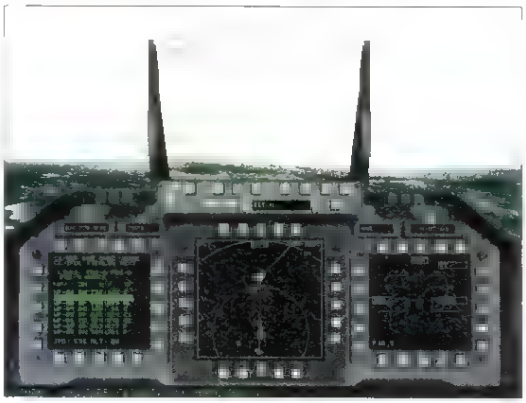
Evasion 101

Even with the best technology avail able your F 22 will still come under attack from enemy missiles and run the risk of going down in flames However, the advanced sensors and displays can greatly help in avoiding and surviving these encounters

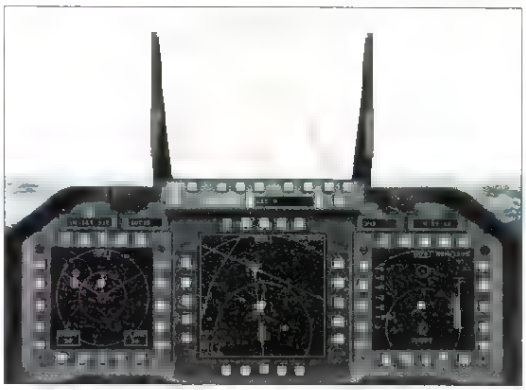
When enemies are present and mis siles are flying, your sight and reflexes will help, but your ears are a strong deterrent to enemy attacks. When an enemy radar has locked on to your aircraft, a missile lock warning will sound (a quick series of short beeps). If out of visual sight, try breaking this lock by shutting down radar, cutting down your RCS, and changing course. This should hopefu ly cause your image to disappear from the enemies' radar screen and keep a m'ssile from being fired. If you are too late at avoiding the missile lock and a launch warning has sounded (a two-tone indicator) then



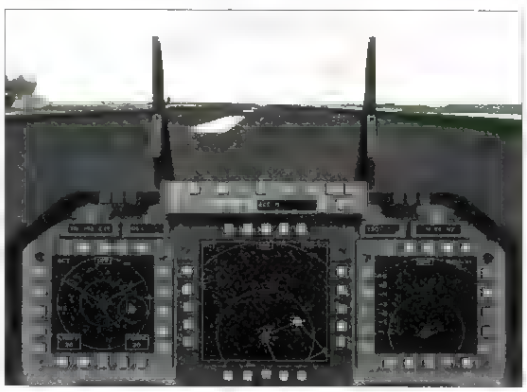
Firing a HARM missile at a radar site on a SEAD mission. Note the radar ring on the Defense mode MFD and the line of the missile on the Tactical mode MFD



Connecting the IFLD with an AWACS in Navigation/Communication mode



Mig-29 targeted with an AIM-120. Note the weapon ranges and efficiency graph on the Tactical mode MFD



Mig-29 targeted with an AIM-120. Note the weapon ranges and efficiency graph on the Tactical mode MFD

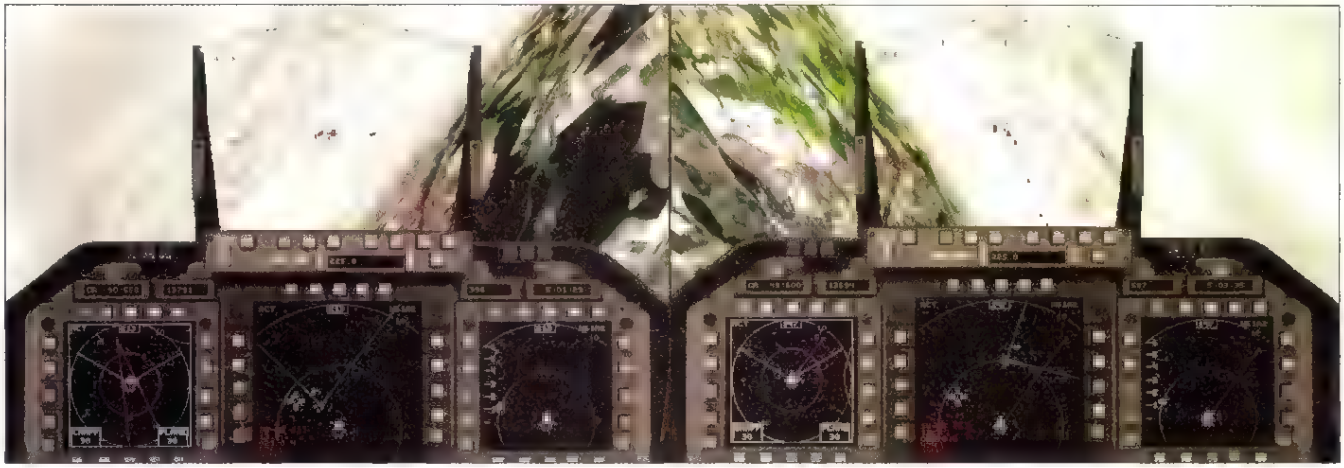
evasive action will be required. Quickly pull up the Tactical mode on your main MFD and decrease range. The missile, a red line leading directly to your craft, should be easily seen. Turn towards the missile, keeping it in front of you at all t'mes; if possible position your plane so it is heading directly for the missile. When within a few miles manually drop chaff, flares or both and make a hard break to the right or left of the missile. The missile should not be able to react quickly due to its high closing velocity and will lose lock.

Countermeasures are an important defensive measure against missiles and should be used wisely. Unlike the American m.ssiles where the determination of infrared or radar seeking can be fig ured generally by the attacking range. Russian types are much more d fficult to figure. The general rule that long range missiles are only radar guided does not fit with the newer Alamo (AA-10) and Archer (AA-11) missiles, wh'ch can have IR sensors and ranges up to 25 miles Taking this into account, it is a probably a safe bet to launch both chaff and flares at any incoming missiles which were fired within 20 m'les. The F-22 has an automatic feature to launch such countermeasures but it is usual ly a more prudent idea to launch manually unless multiple missiles are locked on to your aircraft. The ECM is another tool for m.ssile avoidance and should be toggled on when in close prox imity with an enemy missile. If the missile has been fired from an extremely long distance (30 miles or so) it will be radar guided. Use ECM and chaff to hopefully to throw it off target

True dynamic campaigns

With the dynamic campaign generator in F 22 missions will vary from game to game, so exact mission information is hard to produce – the campaign will progress depending how well you do in battles. A few so so efforts can result in the front being pushed back; many more an you'll eventually lose the campa gn. When choosing missions in the campaign try to pick ones that can further help the tides of battle. If a CAP mission goes bad try picking another one to help turn the tide. If you just completed a very successful SEAD mission try a Ground Strike against the troops who have just lost their electronic eyes and ears. There are eleven types of mission in this simulation and following are some general strategies to help with each type of miss'on

Airfield Attack: This type of mission is a quick blitz against airfield facilities. Fill the weapons bays with air to ground weapons. A couple of air to air miss'les may come in handy as well. If the airfield is well behind enemy lines use your ful



Taking aim with the 20mm cannon

Su-25 under cannon assault. Note the incoming missile on the main MFD

stealth capability and try to avoid any enemy air contacts on the route to the field. Hold on to your air to-air missiles and use them if enemy aircraft arrive while you are finishing up bombing runs

Air Superiority: A payload full of air to air mis siles is needed for this type of miss'on and they will be used quickly – be prepared for a high number of enemy aircraft. If you mount weapons on the external hardpoints try to use them first so your RCS will decrease when the pylons are empty.

Battlefield Air Interdiction (BAI): Missions where the loading of air-to-ground missiles is crucial to the success of the mission. Make sure you have several air-to-air missiles mounted up, however, as this type of mission generally gets messy and draws enemy fight ers into battle Remember also that the 20mm cannon can be a powerful weapon against ground targets. If your supply of mis siles are low and ground fire is too danger ous, go in low and squeeze off some cannon shots at tanks or infantry fighting vehicles.

Combat Air Patrol (CAP): A simple patrol of a friendly airspace, this mission will generally consist of air combat with opposing a'rcraft A full load of air-to-air missiles should do the trick. Also consider adding a little more fuel to your payload just in case some targets show up late in your patrol

Close Air Support (CAS): Similar to a BAI mis sion this is can be a hectic mission with plen ty of ground targets to choose from. If a FAC is involved in such a mission make sure to set up the iFDL for targeting information and pick plenty of laser-guided bombs for the weapons bay. Keep several air to air missiles ready for surprises as well. This type of mis sion can be very time dependent, make sure you keep track of your Time on Target (ToT) and arrive at exactly the right moment

Deep Strike The ultimate stealth mission. If there are plenty of ground targets load up air to ground weapons only and keep the external pylons empty. Keep radar emissions to a bare minimum. Hit the targets hard and head for home

Escort. This type of mission probably involves very little stealth capabi ity because the escorted aircraft usually have large radar sig natures. Arm the plane to the teeth w th air to-air weapons and keep a watchful eye on your speed and time so you are sure to meet up with the escort at the proper place.

Ground Strike· Similar to the Deep Strike but with less distance to travel. Arm the plane with appropriate air to ground weapons and if room is available inside possibly throw in a pair of air-to-air missiles This mission s another one where ToT s extremely impor tant. If all air-to-ground weapons have been dropped and there are stil more targets feel free to go in and use your cannon to take out a few more un ts or structures.

Runway Attack· One of the more difficult mission types, extreme patience must be used to achieve direct hits on runways. Bes des the GBU 31 bombs a few air to-air missiles can come in handy when the enemy s fully alerted

Scramble: As its name infers this mission type is a mad rush to get in the air and attack anything approaching. Stealth is not too important in this particular instance and keep ng the radar active would be a good dea so enemy aircraft may be targeted immediately. Chose targets that appear to be the biggest threat to the base, usually the closest and go after them.

Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD): Load up the hardpoints with AG 88 Anti radi at on miss'les and an assortment of air and ground weapons for this type of mission. Use the HARMs on arger radar sites immediately and then finish off anything else with the rest of your munitions. Wingmen should be instructed to take out targets as well.

Finally it should be noted that campaign suc cess is accomplished by varying each of the mission types Try to get a good mix in dur ing a campaign and your overall skill level will improve greatly. Use the technology of the F 22 to evade and detect your enemies and then use your combat sk lls to surprise, attack and defeat them. *Jim Pedicord*

Tech Tips

With the initial release of iF-22, there have been several performance issues and crashes that can be resolved with a little simple tweaking. Here's a simple way to help the sim run a little better and possibly clear up crash es as well First of the all, the program loves virtual memory. Run the disk defragmenter on the hard drive you wish to set aside for vir tual memory (usually C: \). Open up the con trol panel, click on system, click on the perfor mance tab and then click on virtual memory. Click on "Let me specify my own virtual mem ory settings" and then enter two and half times the amount of RAM you have in your system after the drive letter. If you have 32MB of memory enter "C:\80MB Free". If you have less that 32MB I would leave it at 80MB as well. Another way to speed up disk access on slower machines is load an entire campaign (300MB each) directly to the hard drive through the install program. More help can also be found in a FAQ on the Interactive Magic website:
www.imagicgames.com/f22.dir/f22faq2.html

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MicroLeague Baseball 6.0

The latest, but not the greatest

MicroLeague Baseball was released in the mid 1980s, and at the time many considered it the ultimate baseball simulation for the home computer. It was fun, exciting, addictive, and offered great graphics and real players Unfortunately, this review isn't about that game, but instead covers the latest version. *Sports Illustrated Presents: MicroLeague Baseball 6.0.*

[clockwise from top]
Yep, it's the Florida Marlins' home field, but don't you dare call it "Pro Player Stadium"

This guy just hit a homer – look at all that excitement!

MicroLeague Baseball 6.0's season replays created stats that were pretty realistic

MicroLeague has tried to modernize this fifth version (version 5.0 was never released) with 3D graphics and modem play. While they've added features that are new to this series, *Baseball 6.0* offers nothing new or innovative in the world of baseball simulations. A statistics-based baseball simulation, it lets you manage the teams and players and watch your decisions played out on the screen. No joystick is required; just a mouse and a mind for baseball.

There are several problems with *Baseball 6.0* that make it less fun to play. First, and something that is hard to accept in any baseball game, there is no Major League Baseball license. You get the real players, but instead of real team and stadium names you get: "Baltimore is playing New York at New York Stadium."

The multimedia aspects of the game are also disappointing. Play by-play is provided by Harry Kalas (from NFL films and the Philadelphia Phillies). As is often the case, you'll probably want to turn the announcer off after a few games. His words get repetitive very quickly and every once in a while he says something that makes you say "huh?" For example, several times a batter led off an inning with a homer and when the next batter stepped up to the plate the announcer still said "Leading off for New York." Kalas' home run call is also the same for every batter, every time. When Kalas does make the correct calls the animation often ruins the gameplay anyway

The animation and mouse control are sluggish and deceiving. There are many instances where a batter running to first looked safe only to be called "out," or balls that looked like they were going through the infield only to be fielded and have the runner thrown out

MicroLeague Baseball 6.0 boasts that the game is "The perfect graphical baseball game for the statistical purist" and offers "Guaranteed Statistical Realism." Well, the graphics are nice, but far from perfect. However, MicroLeague must be given credit for getting the stats part right for the most part. Season replays provided team records and statistical leaders that are pretty close to real life results. There are, as is to be expected, some stats that were way off. No stats based game is perfect, but MMI should be acknowledged for its effort. Taking its appeal to stats lovers even further, it offers a career stats option so you can check your league's all time leaders You can also simulate Rotisserie or Fantasy teams and stats (you can also draft fantasy teams with the game's draft option)

Two impressive parts of the game are the trading and draft options. The trading program is quick and easy and everything you need to examine the players and make trades is accessible from the trade players screen. Drafting teams is quick (it took about an hour to complete a 28 team draft) and painless (although the mouse will drive you crazy as you try to scroll through long lists of players)

All in all, this much delayed game should have been delayed a little longer. It offers nothing state-of-the-art, and while its stats engine is good, its multimedia aspects need some more work. The best thing about this game is that it provided inspiration to boot up the 5.25" floppies of the original *MicroLeague Baseball* and fall in love again with the best version of the series –*Dan Olawski*

★★☆☆☆

MicroLeague Baseball 6.0

Microleague Multimedia Inc. • www.mmi.com
Requirements: DOS 6.0, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 1-2 players, Internet, LAN, null modem

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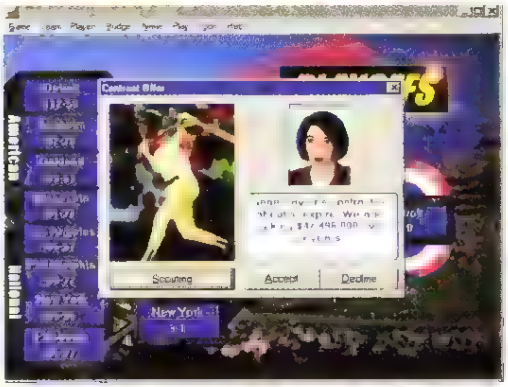
Baseball Mogul

The business of baseball brought to life



Negotiation with free agents is too simplified. Accept or decline - that's it

Baseball is a fascinating business. Free agency, small-markets versus large markets, battles over ticket prices, dwindling attendance, claimed losses by owners. *Baseball Mogul* tries to model the business of baseball, and while it proves to be less than adept at the business side, it turns out to be a surprisingly good statistics based simulation.

You start the game by taking over a team. Take a small market team and expect lower revenue, meaning you get to play Expos ball - nurture young players so you can trade them away before paying them the big bucks. Take over the Yankees and spend big bucks on free agents. In either case, you may find yourself in first or last place. A simple financial model determines your cash flow. You set concession and ticket prices and balance that against salaries and scouting. This area of the game is underdeveloped, and it's pretty easy to make money on all of the skill levels.

The interface is simple enough to figure out, but displaying team statistics and player ratings should be easier (they can be exported to HTML or to tab-delimited text files). Signing free agents is disappointing, with the agent saying, "My guy wants $40 million over 5 years. Well?" and you get to say yes or no. An option should also be included to re-negotiate a contract before its term is up, which would help some of the small-market teams try to keep their young talent (who, like the real jocks, seem to want $5 million a year after one great season - greedy bastards).

However, the computer GM does a superb job with trades, not falling for trading washed up, but high-priced, veterans for minor league superstars (you'll usually have to sweeten the deals with some cash). It's hard to figure out what criteria the game uses to determine player value, but other sims should look long and hard at this implementation.

Baseball Mogul seems to be stuck somewhere between being a business and league simulation, and as such it is somewhat inadequate at both. Managers may be frustrated by the lack of control they're given of their team, while accountants will probably want to dig more into the business of baseball. However, the whole is a lot better than the sum of the parts, and with some tweaks and expansion, it could carve its own successful niche in the market. It's definitely the most original baseball game of the year, and should be on the shelf of any hardcore baseball fan. *-Steve Bauman*

★★★½☆

Baseball Mogul

Infinite Monkey Systems • www.imonkey.com
Requirements: Windows 95, 60MHz Pentium or higher, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM
Multiplayer: None

Aaron vs. Ruth

A mishmash of game styles that doesn't gel as a cohesive whole

Pete Rose enters his crouch

Baseball is one of the few sports with such a rich tradition that a game like *Aaron vs. Ruth* even makes sense. *Jordan vs. Cousy* just doesn't have the same allure. However, it seems the developers were somewhat misguided in choosing to do an arcade baseball game first, with a clunky simulation game tacked on. Why make an arcade game with legendary players – the arcade-fan would probably rather be Ken Griffey Jr. than Babe Ruth.

That quibble aside, the basic premise is sound: take 36 of the greatest players (purists will quibble with the selections) and simulate or play seasons, a series, or individual games. In season mode, you can draft entire leagues of fictional players to round out the rosters and trade players from team to team. However, this aspect of the game is so poorly implemented you have to wonder why it was included at all. You can only simulate a season one game at a time, and the computer trades like a lobotomized George Steinbrenner. You can't simulate a full 162 or 154 game season, so comparing your performance versus the real world is impossible, which is irrelevant since it's unclear how you actually display league or team statistics.

Which basically leaves *Aaron vs. Ruth* as a single-game experience. A lot of energy was obviously expended on motion capturing the quirks and foibles of the classic athletes. You'll get Pete Rose's crouch, Ruth's home-run trot, Joe Morgan's elbow pumping before swinging and Satchel Paige's windmill windup. All are beautifully captured and represented with the polygonal characters. These little details, plus the period stadiums, give the game most of its flavor.

The pitcher batter interface is well done, particularly the batting interface on the harder skill levels. However, would-be managers looking to make key substitutions during the game will be astonished to find you can't access any player ratings during the game. Equally astonishing is the omission of the most important baseball game feature - the box score.

Aaron vs. Ruth is an odd mishmash of game styles that doesn't gel as a cohesive whole. It lacks most of the features that even the most arcade-oriented baseball games have. It does have a certain amount of entertainment value when you actually sit down to play it, but with all of the other (superior) baseball games out there, you'll probably want to pass on it.

Steve Bauman

★★☆☆☆

Aaron vs. Ruth

Mindscape Sports Advantage • www.aaronruth.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 players, same machine

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Extreme performance

The IMS Extreme system shows Pentium II is for you

When Intel releases a new processor, they always claim they're targeted at the server market, or at the scientific community. Readers of this magazine are smart enough to know they're actually aimed at the hardcore gamer, who needs the extra power to run the latest bloated game software. This was true until the arrival of the Pentium Pro, which early adopters found didn't run 16 bit or Windows 95 software very fast and especially lacked in the video department.

Enter the next generation processor, dubbed Pentium II. Essentially a Pentium Pro that incorporates MMX technology, it's proven to be a gamer's panacea, proving equally adept at ripping through Photoshop and *Monster Truck Madness*. At least that's what we heard – we'd never tested one (though we'd seen a lot of software running on them at the Electronic Entertainment Expo).

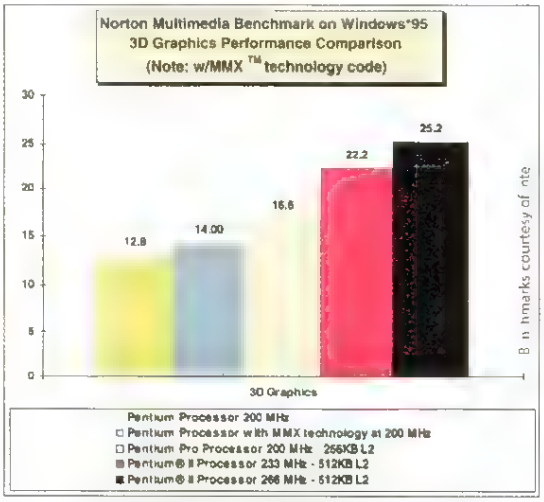
Enter IMS Computers. We wanted to test a Pentium II system – they sell one called the IMS Extreme, which is marketed toward gamers. The system comes with a 266MHz Pentium II, 64MB of RAM, 4.5 gigabyte Maxtor EIDE hard drive, Toshiba 16X EIDE CD-ROM, 4MB Matrox Millennium II video card, 4MB Orchid Righteous 3D accelerator, SoundBlaster AWE32, Viewsonic 6771 17" monitor, 56K SupraExpress modem, and Yamaha YST YST-15 speakers (with a subwoofer). The motherboard is a Shuttle Spacewalker HOT 623 with the Intel 82440FX PCI chipset. The as-tested price was $3,395.

The case is well laid out for a mini tower, with open access to both the Pentium II card and the memory chips. The ATX motherboard has two USB ports and a generous eight SIMM slots, and the unit shipped with two 32MB SIMMs, opening the door for plenty of future expansion.

One weakness of the machine for gamers is a lack of ISA slots, something that's becoming more of a problem with newer motherboard designs. The machine ships with five PCI and three ISA slots, and with the sound card, internal modem and Ethernet card taking up all three slots, there would be no space for a custom joystick card such as the Thrustmaster ACM. Hopefully USB (Universal Serial Bus) will solve this problem, but we're not likely to see that many USB peripherals until there are enough machines with the bus on the market.

Benchmarks verified the feeling we had when we first booted up the machine – this is the fastest Intel-based PC we've ever had in our office. Processor benchmarks (Dhrystone–561 MIPS, Whetstone=161 MFLOPS) and video performance show considerable improvements over a 200MHz MMX Pentium, which perhaps isn't a fair comparison, but is the machine that many people consider the top of the line at the moment.

Running Direct3D benchmark software showed an boost in scores, though the tests



Intel Pentium® II Processor Performance for the Norton* Media Benchmark – 3D Graphics

SideWinder Force Feedback Pro

Microsoft's newest joystick is another case of hardware in search of software

Microsoft's SideWinder line of joysticks welcomes its newest member of the family in the form of the Force Feedback Pro. It provides a number of different tactile effects via software controls, from kickback from weapons to the vibrations of an idling motor.

Its redesigned handle features excellent ergonomics, with the new placement of the third and fourth buttons being considerably improved over the original 3D Pro. The lay out of the buttons on the base forces you to use the joystick with two hands, which forces those who use their stick on the right of their keyboard to move it front and center. The only real design flaw is a power-supply cord that can easily be pulled from the back of the stick (which disables effects, but still retains regular functionality).

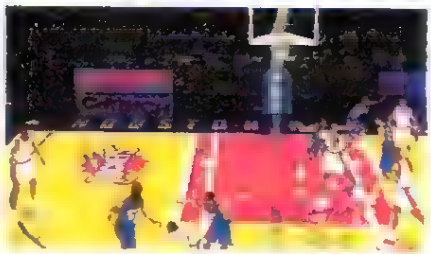
The Force Feedback Pro comes with three games, the full version of *Interstate 76* and reduced versions of *MDK* and the upcoming *Shadows of the Empire*. When playing the latter two games, the effects seem superfluous and, once beyond the "golly, my joystick vibrates when I fire my gun," add little to the gameplay experience.

A game like *Interstate 76* is one that should benefit the most from force feedback, but it seems like its forces may have been rushed in without a lot of thought, because they don't really enhance the experience that much. There's no real simulation of g-forces through the corners, and again it's limited to gunfire effects and vibration when driving off-road.

Other games tested with the stick better show its potential. The one that produces the most interesting feedback is a beta version of Microsoft's own *Flight Simulator 98*. Its effects are quite subtle, but effective (no pun intended).

Overall, the Force Feedback Pro is something of an enigma. Force feedback seems to be most effective with land- or air-based vehicle simulations; however, the SideWinder has always been a questionable choice because of its lack of support for analog rudder pedals (not everyone likes the twisty handle). Beyond that problem, it will take time before the people creating the forces figure out how to utilize them to their fullest extent. Until then, the Force Feedback Pro remains interesting hardware in search of interesting software. *Steve Bauman*

SideWinder Force Feedback Pro



The power of the Pentium II/3Dfx combo allows full detail in games like the upcoming Joint Strike Fighter, Half-Life and NBA Live 98 (clockwise from above)

point out that the numbers don't necessarily translate to real-world performance boosts Native 3Dfx software showed less drastic improvements in performance, mostly because the games were already running at the frame-rate limit on a measly 133MHz Pentium However, games that taxed the 133MHz machine run glass-smooth on the Pentium II

Compatibility is always an issue with a machine, and the Extreme performed remarkably well, handling every piece of final, beta and alpha software thrown at it. 2D performance is incredibly fast and stable - obviously Matrox (finally) has its stuff together. *Quake* runs at the same frame rate at 640x480 as the 3Dfx-native *GLQuake* Whether you're interested in flight simulations (both *iF-22* and *EF2000* run remarkably smoothly) or action games (full screen *Interstate 76* with full detail and minus a 3D card is finally a viable option), you'll get a real boost in your gameplay experience

Gamers interested in being on the bleeding edge and willing to spend a little extra cash should definitely consider Pentium II systems, even with new processors from AMD and Cyrix on the way. Assuming you don't need the software packages that come with the Dells and Gateways of the world, you can't go wrong with the IMS Extreme Pentium II system. It's well-built, and more importantly comes with many of the pieces that gamer's would be forced to add to one of those mass-produced systems. If you're interested in extreme performance, go for the IMS Extreme. *Steve Bauman*

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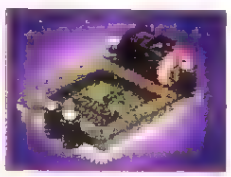


If your computer contains an older Socket 5 motherboard, as many Pentium 133 or slower machines do, you are unable to upgrade by simply plugging in a new high speed CPU. Powerleap has provided an elegant solution to this problem: their *PL/ProMMX* socket upgrade for dual voltage and MMX processors. The *PL/ProMMX* is an adapter that plugs into your motherboard's CPU socket, allowing all of the latest and greatest CPUs, such as the Intel 233MHZ MMX Pentium, the AMD K6-PR2/233, and the Cyrix/IBM 6x86MX, to be drop in replacements for your older CPU. It provides the unique voltages and clock multipliers that today's CPUs require and which many older motherboards cannot supply

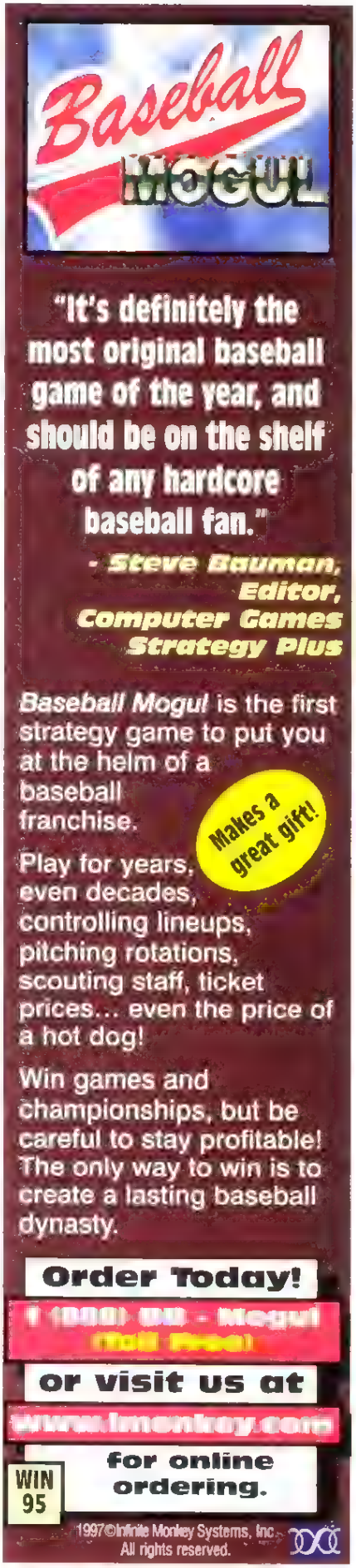
Installation is as simple as plugging your new CPU into the adapter, then replacing your current CPU with the new adapter/CPU combo.

A series of benchmarks were run on the computer, before and after upgrading Benchmarks specifically aimed at CPU performance were used: Wintune 97's Drystone and Whetstone tests. The Landmark Speed benchmark, which runs in DOS, was also used.As seen in the table benchmark scores were approximately doubled by the upgrade

Bottom line: if you have a 133MHz Pentium or slower system, the *PL/ProMMX* provides an upgrade path that is well worth checking out. The adapter comes with a 3 year warranty and a 30 day unconditional money back guarantee. Powerleap can be contacted at www.powerleap.com. –*Jeff Lackey*

BENCHMARK RESULTS

	Before upgrade	After upgrade
Drystone (MIPS)	225.0	440.0
Whetstone (MFLOPS)	68.0	132.0
Flying Corps (FPS)	7.5.0	14.5
Landmark	755.0	1525.0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Sex and violence

You reviewed *Blood*, but you don't review *Strip Poker Pro II*. Are you more comfortable with sadistic violence than sex? What does this say about your standards? Where exactly do you draw the line?

Roger Hunting
Via Internet

At violent sex? In all seriousness, we haven't reviewed Strip Poker II for the same reason we haven't reviewed Hoyle's Casino – we don't cover poker games. We have reviewed Alley Cats, still the finest strip bowling game on the market, and Phantasmagoria 2, which has nudity (and violence). –ed

Love me don't

With respect to important issues of life, a game designer or writer should not try to impose his dogma on the player.

I play adventures and RPG's, and when I do, I imagine myself taking part in dramatic fictional events. But I never fully relinquish my self. I can't. Therefore I don't want my character to be a homosexual, or a pedophile. I want him (or her) to be someone I would be pleased to be, vicariously. Yet when George Stobbart (Circle of Blood) says, "...now they've taken away the woman I love," I can't be him. The game is spoiled for me because I don't believe a human being can love a human being. In *Albion* when leader Tom Driscoll tells party member Sira, "It's great that you and Mellthas have fallen in love," I immediately feel disconnected from the game. When Tex Murphy (*Pandora Directive*) is forced to go out on a date or the game won't proceed - I feel that the game's author is imposing on me his dogma of how to live. I believe in sex, but I don't believe in dates.

I'm not asking game designers and writers to live or to believe the way I do. I just want them to give the player a choice of playing a character who says he loves, or of playing one who doesn't mention love. Let the player decide whether or not the character goes out on a date, or whether or not the character gets married.

The existence or nonexistence of love, the rightness or wrongness of dating and marrying – these are matters of subjective evaluation. Not objective fact.

Please allow me a choice.

Russell R. O'Hara
Via Internet

Preview praise

I have just read the preview for *Fallout* [*CGS+ 79*], and may I just say that it was by far one of the best pieces of writing I have seen in a long time.

Evidently, the author Cindy Yans is an extremely talented writer and as of this moment I am searching this web for more of her work. As an aspiring writer, I have always searched for ways in order to 'touch' the reader in such a way that he or she will become excited after reading my work. Certainly, Ms. Yans is at such a level, and I applaud her piece with near ecstasy!

Nice job and keep up the good work.

Kevin Mantic
Via Internet

Maxis has really done it this time. First, *SimCity*. Then a higher level, *SimCity 2000*. Now the apex, *SimCity 3000*. But best of all, the previews.

CGS+, I have to give you a round of applause and a standing ovation to your preview of *SimCity 3000* [*CGS+ 82*]. It was an excellent report, the best I have ever read in your magazine. I enjoyed the specific details, the honesty of the article, and the humor was good. I would like to thank you for your good work.

Matthew Bromiley
Via Internet

Reviewing the reviews

I normally agree with your in depth reviews of simulations but I was a bit disappointed with the very harsh review and low rating (3/5) of *iF 22* [*CGS+ 83*]. I agree, this sim is not perfect and could use a good patch, but it's far more realistic, fun and deeper (with the dynamic campaign) than games like NovaLogic's *F-22*. I also think that the graphics are very good and the (realistic) flight model seems very adequate.

I'm not sure that Tom Chick spent a lot of hours with this sim before the review. I personally think I-Magic did a decent job for their first in-house sim with *iF 22*. The content of this review was also very harsh and full of unnecessary personal comments like:

"...(translation: "I'm too dumb to fire it correctly")..." I tend to like that not all missile launches result in hits.

"One of Interactive Magic's guesses is that the avionics are so sophisticated that a child could operate them." Other posts from people who claim to know the F22 avionics seem to indicate that the avionics representation in *iF-22* is accurate.

"...hideous terrain..." That's very subjective.

Well, that's just my feedback as one of your reader and subscriber. Personally, I would have given *iF-22* a rating of 4 stars.

Pascal Vin
Via Internet

A 4/5 rating wouldn't constitute a "decent job" – using that description, 3/5 would seem appropriate. As for comparing it to NovaLogic's F-22 Lightning II, it was reviewed for what it was - an action-oriented "lite" simulator. Finally, a review is supposed to be subjective. –ed

—

I've just read Tom Chick's review of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* [*CGS+ 81*] and I think you are a bunch of bumbling idiots. You guys can't read if you think the CDs are spelled wrong and something must be wrong with your computer if you think the Totally Games logo looks like crap.

I decided to try your little scoring theory and I noticed that they threw a few, just one or two, more ships at you when you pick tougher ships and better weapons. And to the thing about the atmosphere like turning, just because you're in space it doesn't mean that there are absolutely no gases what so ever. All though I can't defend everything about this game, I think it still deserves more than 3 1/2 stars.

Other than this article and the one about *Blood*, I enjoyed your magazine.

Brook Thompson
Via Internet

Welcome to "Bash Tom Chick Reviews" month. As for the CDs, we can only assume LucasArts fixed the CD error in subsequent rebuilds of the game box. And some of us here happen to like the Totally Games logo he didn't– but that doesn't mean something's wrong with his or our computers. –ed

Rating the ratings

I felt that I needed to write to you about your magazine. I am a new subscriber, and for the first couple issues, I was satisfied. As more issues came to my door, I began to realize that you guys must love to write. Almost 7/8's of the magazine is typed. I like to see a lot of pictures of the games to see if the graphics are pretty descent. I don't want to rely on your words that the graphics in a game are awesome or not. I probably have different tastes than you do.

Also, your ratings system sucks. You only rate the game as a whole. There are many different parts to a game, such as graphics, gameplay, controls, and whether the game is really worth playing. That's how a game should be rated.

Matthew Mackey
Via Internet

Coming next month – scratch-and-sniff reviews! Our innovative new technology will allow you to skip all of that darn reading get a whiff of what makes a game good or bad. Your nose knows reviewing™ with Computer Games Strategy Plus.

But seriously, rating the game as a whole takes into account graphics, gameplay, controls, etc. More ratings do not necessarily make them any more valuable. –ed

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by a controversial war ...

THE 1860S, THAT IS.

July 2, 4:00 PM.
Southern Objective:
Take Peach Orchard
to attain pivotal
strategic position.

Rally your mixed troops
around a general for
effective firepower.

Maneuver with a
Double Battle-
line formation.

Attack from the
rear to protect
your flanks.

Charge Union right,
the thick of it now.

T

GETTYS

CHOOSE YOUR SIDE.

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863

July 2 4:00 P.M.
Northern Objective:
Defend Peach Orchard to maintain supply lines.

Keep your general close by to improve morale.

Bolster your line with these reinforcements.

Take the high ground for tactical advantage.

Overcome opposing lines with rifled cannon.

ETER'S
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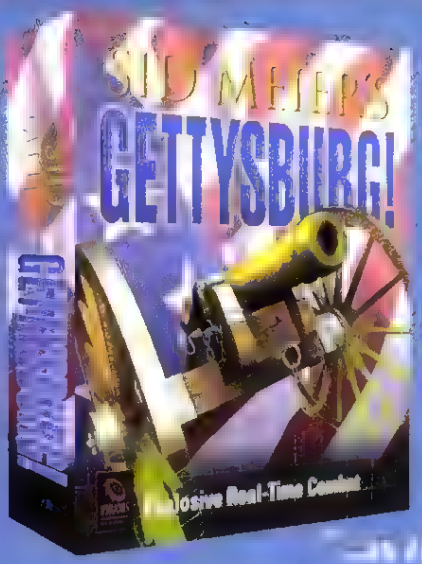

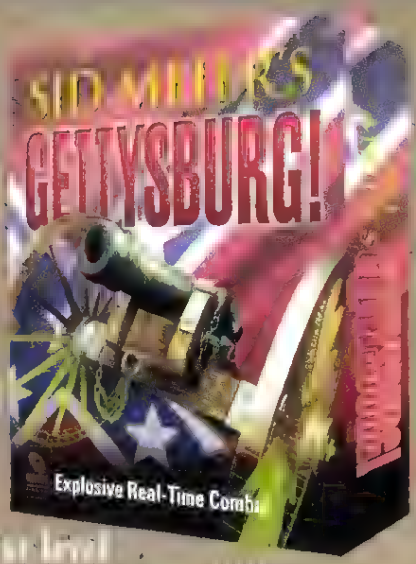

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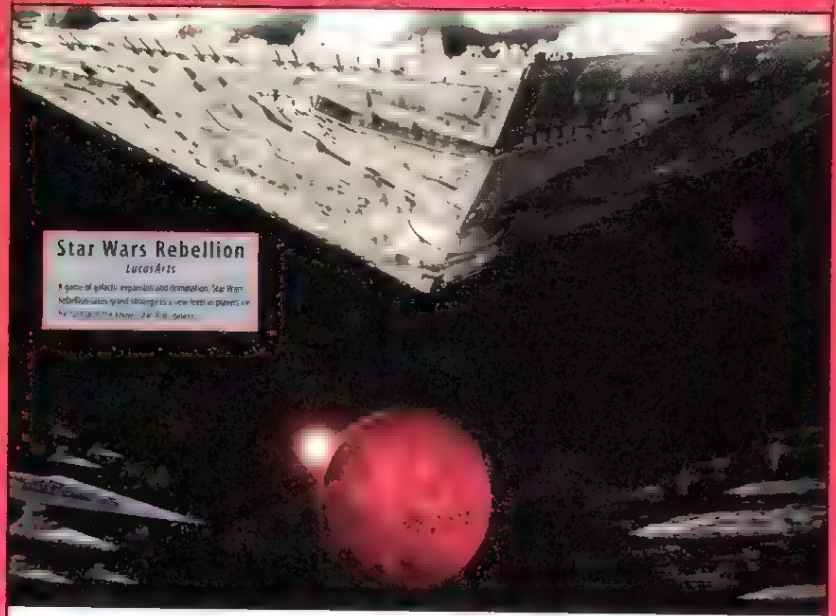

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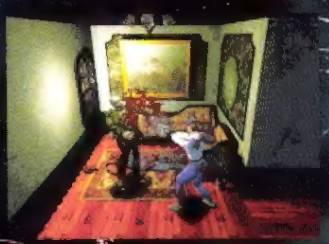

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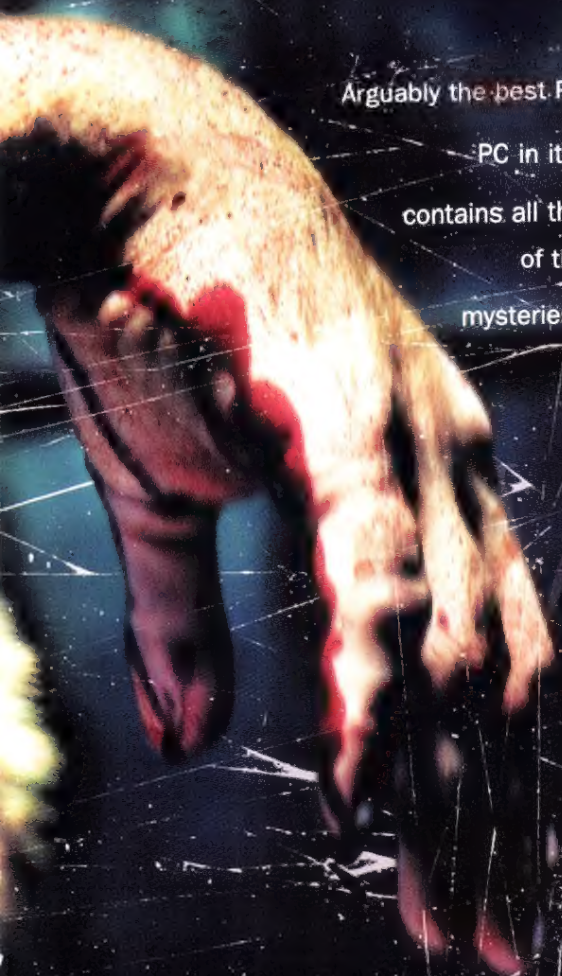

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